TRANSLATIONS
OF
CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

LIFE OF ST. SAMSON OF DOL

THOMAS TAYLOR, B.D.

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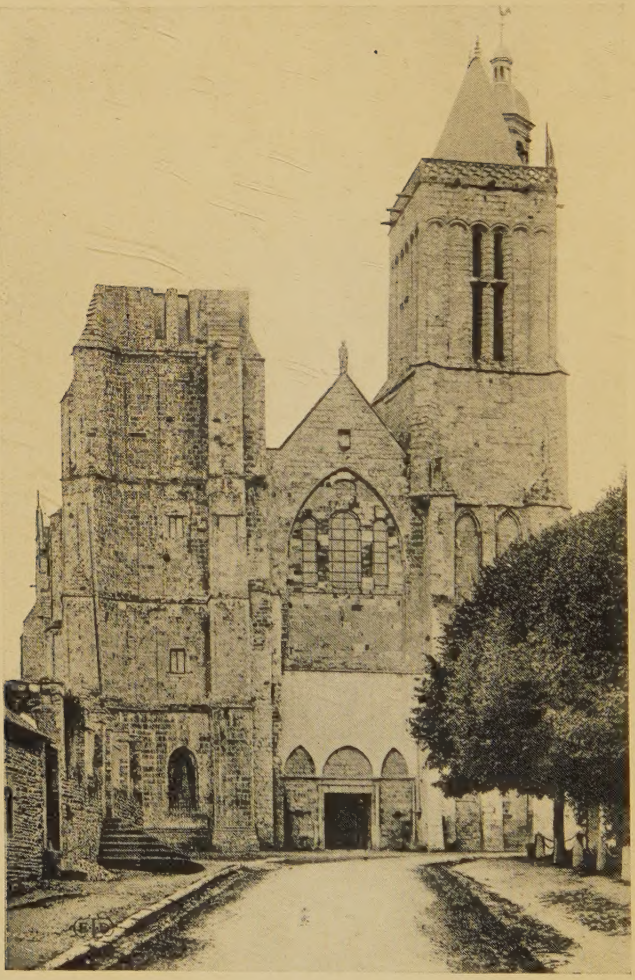
SERIES V

LIVES OF THE CELTIC SAINTS

EDITED BY ELEANOR HULL

THE LIFE OF ST. SAMSON OF DOL



DOL CATHEDRAL.

THE LIFE OF ST. SAMSON OF DOL

BY

THOMAS TAYLOR, B.D.

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INTRODUCTION

LITTLE is known of British and Irish Christianity during the first three centuries of our era. No Christian inscriptions have been found in Britain of an earlier date than the middle of the fourth century, and with the single exception of the martyrdoms of St. Alban at Verulam and of St. Aaron and St. Julius at Caerleon, between A.D. 286 and 304, recorded by Gildas and the Venerable Bede, history is silent on the subject.

The fourth century, a period of momentous interest for the rest of Christendom, marked by the decisions of two General Councils, by the labours of great theologians like Athanasius, Ambrose, Gregory of Nazianzus and Chrysostom, by the rise and spread of Christian monasticism,[1] and, above all, by the bestowal of ecclesiastical liberty in largest measure, was apparently, for Britain and Ireland, a time of preparation and progress, some of the results of which were to be made manifest in the century which followed. There is one historical event, however, which, occurring as it did near the beginning of the fourth century, has necessarily given rise to much speculation and ought not to be passed over. The British Church was summoned to take part in the Council or Synod of Arles in Southern Gaul in the year 314, the object of which was, *inter alia*, to determine the validity of Cæcilian's consecration as Bishop of Carthage by Felix, who lay under the imputation of having apostatised during the Diocletian persecution. To this

[1] St. Anthony organised it in Egypt in or about the year 305. Lowther Clarke, *Lausiac History of Palladius*, p. 93.

Council three British bishops, those of York, London and Lincoln (or Cærleon), were invited. How and by whom had the Christian religion been first introduced into this country? Various answers have been submitted. Christian captives brought to Britain, foreign soldiers belonging to the Roman army of occupation, demobilised British soldiers who whilst on service in other parts of the Empire had been converted to the Christian religion, Christian traders to Britain who had eventually made it their home—some or all of these instrumentalities, apart from direct missionary enterprise, which must also be allowed for, probably contributed. There is, however, yet another element which Professor Bury has admirably described in his *Life of St. Patrick* as the " immeasurable reverence for Rome which is one of the governing psychical facts in the history of ' the wandering of the nations.' " This element would obviously be of little advantage to Christianity until the days of Constantine the Great; but, with his recognition of Christianity in the year 323, and in a much greater degree, when under Theodosius I in 386 it became practically established as the religion of the Empire, we can believe that a vast impetus would be given to its diffusion not only in Britain, which was a part of the Empire, but also in countries like Ireland, which had never been brought under Imperial rule. There is yet another point which must be kept in mind, even at this stage in our sketch of the causes contributory to the spread of Christ's religion. The relations between Britain and Gaul, long before the British exodus to Armorica in the fifth century, were close and intimate both as the result of geographical proximity and of kinship in blood and religion. These had been the causes which led Julius Cæsar to invade Britain, and these doubtless account for the points of agreement to be noted later between the Gallican and

British Liturgy, and possibly for the visits of St. German, St. Loup and Severus. It is not without reason that Gaul has come to be regarded as the immediate source of British Christianity.

When the fifth century dawned Alaric was on the point of invading Italy, Patrick, the future apostle of Ireland, was a lad of twelve years living with Calpurnius, his father, in Britain; Pelagius, the protagonist of free-will upon which he based the denial of original sin,[1] was already at Rome. All three were to shape directly or indirectly the habit, character, and polity of the British Church. The invasion of Italy and consequent withdrawal of the Roman legions, left Britain at the mercy of the Saxon invader. Large numbers of the Britons sought refuge in the west, especially in the more remote and inaccessible regions of Wales and Cornwall, while others crossed the Channel and practically colonised Armorica, which was soon to be known as Lesser Britain or Brittany. This exodus began in the second quarter of the century and continued for a century and a half,[2] and as a result of it we find on either side of the Channel a race with the same language and religious customs, in frequent communication and the sharers of a common tradition.

The heresy of Pelagius penetrated to Britain, though there are no grounds for supposing that he himself promulgated it among his own countrymen, and in 429 St. German of Auxerre and St. Loup (Lupus) of Troyes were sent to bring the Britons to a better mind. On its recrudescence St. German, accompanied by Severus, Bishop of Trèves, paid a second visit in 447. These visits serve to show that there was already in the

[1] Dr. Newman has called attention to the fact that this doctrine is to be found neither in the Apostles' nor the Nicene Creed. *Essay on Development*, p. 19.

[2] Loth, *L'Émigration Bretonne*, p. 158.

earlier half of the century a considerable body of Christians [1] in West Britain who probably looked to Gaul as their spiritual mother. It is not improbable that to these missions of St. German and his companions we owe, if not the origin, the rapid growth of monasticism, which, in the four centuries which followed, wrought a complete transformation in the polity and discipline of the British Church. St. Patrick studied under and was consecrated by St. German. St. Loup, before he became a bishop, had been a monk of Lérins. At the same time there is no reason to doubt that the missions of St. German, originating in appeals from Britain, had the sanction of Pope Celestine, though St. German's biographer is silent on the point.[2] Be that as it may, it is certain that by the middle of the sixth century the predominant element of the British Church was monastic. In the Life of St. Samson (i. 7) we are told that Iltut (Eltut), Samson's master, had been ordained priest by St. German and that the monastery over which St. Samson presided had been founded by St. German. The former statement does not agree with the accepted chronology, and the latter may be an ellipsis, but in any case such statements imply that St. German was regarded, in the seventh century, as an active promoter of the monastic ideal in Britain. In the earlier half of the fifth century the intercourse between Southern Gaul and the East was intimate and constant. St. Jerome was living at Bethlehem and was in frequent communication with Southern Gaul. His courier, a monk named Sysinnius, kept the latter region regularly supplied with news of the monks of the Thebaid and of Nitria. Cassian, who had been educated at

[1] St. Athanasius in 363 had included Britain among those nations who remained faithful to the Catholic Faith. Haddon and Stubbs, *Councils*, I, 7, 8.

[2] Prosper, a contemporary, expressly states that Celestine sent St. German.

Bethlehem, was living in Southern Gaul. He, like Jerome, was a strenuous apostle of the religious life. It is therefore not improbable that already, before St. German's visits, the seeds of the monastic ideal had been sown. That it found a congenial soil in Celtic lands has been pointed out by Professor Loth.[1] The disposition of the Celt was to withdraw from active life and to seek " a land of peace and of eternal youth where the body never withers and there are none save young men and girls, who know nothing of sin or of sickness or of death." Face to face with the sterner ideals of the Christian Gospel, to the Celt the religious life became a consuming passion. It promised dangers, adventures and hardships such as called into play the best resources of heroic manhood. It was at once social and individual. The cloistered cenobite, at the beck of the Spirit, might at any moment, with his abbat's consent, become a solitary, and the solitary a cenobite. The moral influence of such men was unbounded. They were accepted as the Lord's prophets who, for His Name's sake, appeared before kings with the thunderbolts of judgment, who out of weakness were made strong, men indeed " of whom the world was not worthy, who wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth."

In Britain the most important monastery in the fifth century was that of Llantwit, founded by St. Eltut (Iltut), who counted among his disciples St. Samson and St. Paul Aurelian, and possibly Gildas and St. David. Of these Gildas claims attention because, in his work *De Excidio*, written about the year 540, he not only gives an account of the devastation of Britain by the Saxons and of the British emigration, but also, with a vehemence and an invective which reminds one of the darkest pages of Old Testament prophecy, denounces the profligacy of

[1] *L'Émigration Bretonne*, p. 139.

the rulers of his own day, sparing neither king nor bishop, neither priest nor layman, but exposing, without the slightest reservation or distinction, the sins of all alike. It is hardly true to say that he confines his vituperation to the civil rulers and the secular clergy; for, having dealt with the former, he says he would willingly bring his remarks to an end " did he not behold such great masses of evil deeds done against God by bishops or other priests or clerks, yea, some of our own order." [1] Gildas has been styled the Jeremiah of Britain and his flamboyant language has been ridiculed. But it should be remembered that it is to him that we owe practically all that we know of Britain during the fifth and sixth centuries, Samson's biographer having lived a generation later. Both are agreed that the Church had become worldly without becoming wise. Simony, avarice, excess—these are the prevailing vices. The works of the flesh are manifest. In these respects Britain differed little from Gaul. St. Jerome, who died in 420, Salvianus, who lived a little later, and Gregory of Tours (540–595) have given us a picture of the manners of their contemporaries which fills us with shame. Drunkenness was so general that it was hardly regarded as a vice. In the Life of St. Samson, Piro's untimely end [2] is even less instructive than a short sentence in the chapter devoted to an eulogy of the saint's virtues, a sentence which, if it occurred in the biography of a modern bishop, would be read with indignant protest—Nunquam aliquis vidit eum ebrium.[3] St. Samson's biographer appears to have considered it a matter for amazement that even a saint could always keep sober.[4]

[1] Chap. LXV. [2] Chap. XXXVI. [3] Chap. XV.

[4] In the Penitential attributed to Gildas there is a monastic rule which enjoins, *Si quis autem ebrietatis causa psallere non potest stupens e linguis cena privatur!* Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils*, I, 114.

The precise relation between the secular clergy and the monks is a problem which is not solved in the work before us. In the sixth chapter the saint's father is made to exhibit strong disapproval of his son's becoming a clerk on the ground that the office was unworthy of his exalted birth, and in the sixtieth chapter there is a reference to depraved priests. Apart from these references, which may or may not relate to the secular clergy, there is nothing to show that there was such a body in existence. The inference to be drawn is that regulars and seculars were practically independent of each other.

The reader may find it convenient to have a brief sketch of St. Samson's career, gathered from the Life, for the purpose of reference. His birthplace is not given. Amon, his father, was of Dyfed, and Anna, his mother, of the neighbouring province of Gwent in South Wales. The date of his birth has been inferred from data supplied by the Life.[1] St. Samson was ordained bishop (1) on the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter (February 22), (2) on a Sunday, (3) at the beginning of Lent. Making allowance for the British method of computing time, we get the year 521 as the probable year of his consecration. Assuming that he was thirty-five years of age when that event took place, he would be born in the year 486. When he was five years of age he was taken by his parents to the school of St. Iltut at Llantwit near Cowbridge, and while there was ordained deacon [2] and priest.[3] Thence, in response to a heavenly call, he went to the monastery of Piro, and while there, somewhat reluctantly, paid a visit to his parents, as the result of which

[1] Life of St. Samson, Chaps. XIII, XXXIII and XLII. Cf. Duchesne, *Christian Worship* (S.P.C.K.), p. 359.

[2] Chap. XIII. The site of St. Iltut's monastery has been admirably described by E. J. Newell, *Ancient British Church*, pp. 115 *et seq.*

[3] Chap. XV.

the entire family (with the exception of his young sister), together with his uncle and his family, devoted themselves to the religious life. Returning together to Piro's monastery they had an interview with Bishop Dubricius, who had ordained Samson. Soon afterwards, on the death of Piro, he became abbat. During his abbatiate he paid a visit to Ireland and, after his return, sent his uncle Umbraphel to that country to take charge of a monastery which had been given him. While in retreat with his father and two others, near the banks of the Severn, he was summoned to a synod and ordained bishop. Then, apparently, for the first time, he found himself free to act on his own initiative. Bidding farewell to the monastery where he had succeeded Piro, he sailed to Cornwall. Landing near Egloshayle he directed his course to St. Kew (Docco),[1] where he was welcomed by Winniau (Juniavus). Thence traversing the district of Trigg, in a southerly direction, he came to a port which is, without doubt, that of Fowey,[2] whence he embarked for Brittany. There he founded the monastery of Dol : there he died and was buried. Such in briefest outline is the story of St. Samson.

The reader will necessarily expect something to be said concerning the miracles which St. Samson is alleged to have performed. However difficult it may be for the modern mind to grasp the fact, there can be no question that the saint's biographer accepted the miracles as authentic. Christian and pagan alike, in the sixth century, believed in magic and miracle. St. Iltut in the

[1] St. Kew appears as Landoho in King Edgar's charter (958–975), as Tohou in 1121, and in the Episcopal Registers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as Landoho, Lanho and Lanow.

[2] William of Worcester (1478) calls attention to the fact that Fowey is opposite Brittany. Two miles from Fowey is the parish of St. Samson.

Life [1] is described as being by birth a most wise magician. The Church was not slow to use whatever gifts a man possessed in her service. She found warrant for her belief in the efficacy of faith, prayer and fasting in the New Testament.[2] Nothing is impossible with God. Whether we accept or reject the miracles of St. Samson, we have no right to blame his biographer for believing in and recording them. As Abbé Duine has most truly observed, "We must not reproach anyone for having had the mentality of his own times." [3] The fact that the writer of the Life shared the temper and habit of mind of the age in which he lived is no argument against the historicity of his work. Rather it is an argument in its favour. If it be objected that the lives of many saints of a subsequent date are notoriously untrustworthy in respect of historical detail, it will be sufficient to remark that the Life of St. Samson actually furnished the mould into which many of them were cast. Not only did the successors of our anonymous writer seek to rival him in the number and extent of the miracles they related, but, just as he borrowed words, expressions and phrases from St. Gregory the Great and others, so they borrowed in like manner from him.[4] We must distinguish between the mould and the metal, base or otherwise, which derives its impress from it.

It would be indeed strange if at a time like this, when every particle of historical evidence is being subjected to the most searching criticism, the Life of St. Samson should escape. We are therefore not surprised to find that a diligent and resourceful writer, one indeed to whom all students are under a great obligation for having

[1] Chapter VII. [2] St. Matt. xvii, 20, 21; St. Mark ix, 29.
[3] Duine, *Annales de Bretagne* (April 1913), p. 341.
[4] See, for example, Chapter XXIV, "I have left Egypt," and compare with it the *Life of St. Winwaloe*, edited by R. Latouche, p. 102.

provided them with a useful text of the work, has gone so far as to charge our author with untruthfulness and to declare his work spurious And inasmuch as Gregory of Tours and our author are the chief sources of the evidence for the settlement of the Britons in Armorica, and for the creation of the monastery bishoprics in that country, his judgment could not be allowed to pass unchallenged. M. Fawtier has been answered by the Abbé Duine and Professor Loth. It is a question of internal evidence involving scholarship and an intimate knowledge of language and religious literature. Here it must suffice to give, in brief, one or two of the points raised and their answers, leaving the reader to consult the bibliography [1] for a further treatment of the subject.

Our author states that the sources of his information are a life of the saint written by the deacon Henoc, nephew of St. Samson, and handed down to his nephew, an old man of eighty years; also various particulars communicated to him orally by the same old man and by the monks of Llantwit. The critic inquires: Why does our author, who professes to know the name of Samson's nephew, whom he styles Henoc, not give us also the old man's name? The answer is: The name of the former is important, he was a writer; if our author had been an inventor he would have found it just as easy to invent a name for the old man as to invent one for his uncle. Again: Why does our author have recourse to Litanies for the names of the saint's parents? The answer is: He has not recourse to Litanies at all: he merely adds an interesting bit of information, namely, that at the reading of the diptychs at Mass he himself has heard their names read out along with those of others. But why does our author not tell us something of the saint's life at Dol? He does tell us something,

[1] See p. xlii.

and that of very great interest—the story of Judual, involving negotiations with and a visit to Hiltbert (Childebert). Yet he can tell us little or nothing of the miracles performed by the saint in Brittany? That is because he knew nothing of them and was too honest to invent any. Still he was ignorant of the day of the saint's death? The statement is absurd, because at the time when it is claimed that he wrote, the Hieronymian martyrology which mentions St. Samson was already in existence. Nevertheless, admitting this to be true, how comes it that in this martyrology St. Samson is described not as bishop but as abbat? In answer to this objection it would suffice to say that there is nothing remarkable in this: an abbat-bishop was just as likely to bear one title as the other in a cartulary: in this case the entry is *Dolo monasterio depositio S. Samson (is) Abbatis*, and the title of the Saint is governed by the word monastery.

This brings us to the crucial question of monastery bishoprics, concerning which much has been written. M. Fawtier states that abbat-bishops existed in Ireland but not in Gaul. That by Gaul he intends to include Brittany seems evident from a footnote, in which he commits a further imprudence by denying the existence of abbat-bishops in Wales and apparently in Cornwall. It should be explained that by an abbat-bishop is meant a bishop whose see is placed in the monastery of which he is also abbat, and whose episcopal jurisdiction is conterminous with the sphere of his monks' labours. Such jurisdiction doubtless in some cases extended over a considerable tract of country in the vicinity of the monastery.[1] In Cornwall the existence of monastery

[1] Is it possible that in the episode of Morinus the deacon (II, 7) *major administratio inclitissima* means a council or chapter dealing with the affairs not of the monastery only, but also of its dependencies?

bishoprics has been investigated.[1] It is a matter of comparatively small importance whether Dinurin is identified with Gerrans or with St. Germans. One thing is quite certain, namely, that it was a monastery and that Kenstec was its abbat-bishop. In his letter to Archbishop Ceolnoth, 833–870, Kenstec describes himself as Ego Kenstec . . . (ad) episcopalem sedem in gente Cornubia in *monasterio quod lingua Brettonum appellatur Dinuurin electus.* In Wales it is difficult to avoid the same conclusion. Professor Loth, speaking of the Welsh bishoprics, says, " The seat of these bishops has been always at first in a monastery, and it is the monastery which constituted the chief religious centre of the diocese." [2] In Ireland and the Irish missions there was the same system and a perverse development of it which tended to destroy the governmental prerogative of the bishop altogether. The abbat became supreme and the bishop in some cases a mere conduit of the grace of Holy Orders. There are, however, no traces of this development in Wales, Brittany and Cornwall. There was nevertheless a very distinct tendency throughout Celtic Christendom to ignore the important principle of the Catholic Church, that a bishop should have not only succession from the Apostles, but also be in a right relation both to the local Church of which he claimed to be head and to the whole Church.[3] In Celtic Christianity we see, therefore, the doctrine of the sacramental transmission of the grace of Holy Orders carried to its extreme limit.

To this spirit of independence must be ascribed the rejection by the British clergy of the overtures of St. Augustine of Canterbury. Owing to the Saxon invasion,

[1] T. Taylor, *The Celtic Christianity of Cornwall.*
[2] *La Vie de S. Samson de Dol*, p. 13.
[3] *The Church and the Ministry*, ed. Dr. Swete, p. 107.

the isolation of the British Church had been inevitable and it was confirmed by racial antagonism. Brittany owed its religion no less than its language to Britain. The Welsh missions of Paul Aurelian, Lunaire, Samson, Magloire, Mewan and Malo, and that of Tutwal of British Dumnonia, served to stereotype the original character of its ecclesiastical polity and of its clergy. It would have been strange if the Church of Brittany had not been fashioned according to a monastic type and if the rulers of it had not been abbat-bishops.

Destructive criticism has not discredited the Life of St. Samson: constructive criticism has strengthened its claim to be authentic. To this latter work the Abbé Duine has brought his immense stores of learning and Professor Loth his unrivalled knowledge of the Celtic language and literature. The Abbé Duine has carefully sifted the Life for traces of foreign material in its construction, and has shown that of the thirty words, phrases and allusions borrowed from religious writers, nine are from St. Gregory the Great, eight from Sulpicius Severus, four from St. Jerome, three from Rufinus, and two each from Fortunatus, Cassian and Evagrius. The simile in the first chapter of the second part, in which our author likens himself with limited intelligence to a little barque traversing a vast and very deep sea, appears to be common to Cassian, Fortunatus and Gildas. "*Bien malin,*" says l'Abbé Duine, "*qui nous dirait quel rhéteur lança le premier ce bateau-la?*" As the result of his survey he has arrived at two definite conclusions: firstly, that our author supplies us with no trace of any literary composition subsequent to the end of the sixth century; secondly, that he knows the fame of St. Martin but omits even to mention his name. The second of these conclusions probably indicates a fixed determination on the part of our author not to acknowledge any

obligation whatsoever to Tours, which claimed jurisdiction over the Breton Church : the first is a convincing argument in favour of the date 610–615 for the composition of the work.

Our author's mind is saturated with the Holy Scripture to a much greater extent than can be gathered from a translation, however literal. He quotes twelve passages from the Bible but not from the Vulgate version. As M. Berger has observed, the Vulgate did not commend itself to Gaul for several centuries. From the sixth to the eighth it made progress slowly but surely in the British Isles. The Breton Church evidently did not use it in the days of St. Samson's biographer at the beginning of the seventh century. As M. Duine has shown, it is not unlikely that the version used by him differed even more widely from the Vulgate than appears from the most ancient extant manuscripts of the Life, which are not older than the eleventh century.

A very ingenious solution has been formed of the origin of the word *theomacha*, which we have translated sorceress.[1] It is clearly the Latin equivalent of Θεομάχος. M. Duine supposes that in the Acts,[2] where the Vulgate translates μήποτε καὶ Θεομάχοι by *ne forte et Deo repugnare inveniamini*, the old Breton version read *ne forte theomachi adversus Deum pugnantes inveniamini*, and that our author got the word from it. St. Patrick (389–461) did not use the Vulgate of the Old Testament, but there are indications of his use of that version of the New.

The Church has always required from those who have sought to be admitted to Holy Orders some evidence of vocation and some outward token indicative of fitness. In primitive times great importance was attached to the latter irrespective of intellectual and moral qualification

[1] See Chapter XXVI. [2] Chap. V, 39.

and soundness in the faith. The prophecies which pointed to Timothy [1] were probably outward tokens, such as St. Paul and others had observed, strengthened by a divine message given through them. These and the opening words of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians find an echo in the story of St. Samson. Throughout the Life our biographer sets himself to show that the saint was, as regards vocation and ministry, not merely a natural product of the Christianity of his own day but something more excellent. His birth, like that of the Baptist, was heralded by angelic prophecy: his admission to all three orders was signalled by the presence of a dove which hovered above him. The vision of the three heavenly bishops consecrating him was so convincing that he did not doubt that he was thereby already made a bishop, although as yet he had not received the outward and visible rite. He was approved by signs and wonders. It was for the confirmation of the faith of others that Dubricius and his brother bishops resolved that he must fulfil all righteousness and submit to receive consecration in the usual way. Indeed, so far from favouring what has been called a charismatic ministry, the Life of St. Samson witnesses to the sense of order and discipline which characterised the saint and his environment. It was only with Eltut's permission that he went to heal the brother bitten by a viper. It was Eltut who procured his ordination to the diaconate and to the priesthood. His departure from Eltut's monastery was by mutual agreement. At Piro's bidding he visited his father. On Piro's death he was chosen abbat. With the bishop's sanction he was allowed to sail for Ireland. He was summoned to the Synod, and by the elders (*majores*) appointed abbat of a monastery said to have been founded by St. German. At a congregation of the

[1] 1 Tim. i, 18: *κατὰ τὰς προαγούσας ἐπί σε προφητείας.*

bishop's counsellors it was unanimously resolved that he should be made a bishop. It was only when he had been admitted to the episcopate that he appears to have exercised a personal predilection for a special sphere of work, if indeed his departure from Wales can be so regarded. It is not in the least improbable that it was in response to an invitation that he crossed the Severn and the Channel for the purpose of confirming the Churches of Cornwall and Brittany. Unfortunately our author is silent upon this point.

(1) With regard to Samson's ordination to the diaconate,[1] the reader will notice that the brothers in the first place *acclaim* him. This represents the election of the candidate, which was characteristic of early ordinations both to the diaconate and the episcopate.[2] In the Gallican ordinal the president of the bishops in presenting the candidate asks the congregation to acclaim him. If he be a bishop they are to be accordant in their praises and to cry aloud and say he is worthy : if he be a priest they are with a common voice to declare their choice : if he be a deacon they are to assent with their voices. In every case, if the selection of the candidate is approved, they are to express their approval by *Dignus est*.[3]

(2) Besides acclaiming Samson, at his first ordination, we are told that the brothers bent for pardon. This evidently refers to the Litany. In the Roman Sacramentaries the Litany was a preliminary to the ordination of bishops, priests and deacons.

(3) The Bishop laid his hands upon him.

(4) Moreover, we read that a deacon sang the Gospel

[1] See Chap. XIII of the Life : *consentientibus et congaudentibus omnibus fratribus*.

[2] See Dr. Frere, *Early Forms of Ordination*, in Dr. Swete's *History of the Church and Ministry*.

[3] Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, pp. 369–373.

and a prayer and also held the chalice at the Communion. St. Jerome (420) speaks of the deacon as the reader of the Gospel, and from that time this became his special privilege.[1] Moreover, from the days of Justin Martyr he has administered the chalice at Communion. It is not clear what prayer our author here refers to. In the Gallican rite it was the deacon's duty to bid the kiss of peace, which in that and other cognate rites preceded the Eucharistic prayer and was itself accompanied by a prayer. It may have been, therefore, the invitation, *Habete osculum dilectionis et pacis ut apti sitis sacrosanctis mysteriis Dei*,[2] or similar words, but in that case the word *precem* used by our author would have to be taken in the sense of a request addressed to the people. Or, it may be that the deacon was allowed to sing the prayer which followed. At Rome the deacon sang the Gradual, but this could hardly be described as a prayer.

No particulars are furnished of the saint's ordination to the priesthood save that the wonted dove was observed to be present. This incident reminds us of a similar dove which alighted on the head of Fabian in 250[3]: both were doubtless regarded as symbolical of the Holy Spirit.

At St. Samson's consecration several additional particulars are to be noted. In the dream preparatory to it the saint sees three bishops, St. Peter, St. James the Lord's brother, and St. John the Evangelist, ordain him bishop. The selection is significant. The saint is to derive his episcopal descent from the founders of the three primatial sees of the infant Church, Rome, Jerusalem and Ephesus. The three bishops wear golden crowns (*diademata*), the insignia of the Celtic bishop.[4]

[1] Fortescue, *The Mass*, pp. 280–281.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 371. These words are from the Mozarabic Liturgy.
[3] Eusebius, *H.E.*, VI, 29 (31).
[4] Warren, *Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, pp. 119–120.

They are clothed in gorgeous apparel of pure silk, while he himself is vested in white, a sign that due regard was paid to the higher rank in the matter of externals. If, as M. Duine shrewdly conjectures, the true reading in the passage we have translated "until he was quite through the ceremony" [1] is usquequo *perunctus* perfecte est instead of *perfunctus*, we have an interesting example of the use of the Gallican ordinal and of the anointing of the hands. As Mgr. Duchesne has pointed out,[2] the anointing of bishops and also of priests was Gallican in origin and was subsequently introduced into the Roman ordinal.

The circumstances under which the saint's father confessed a principal mortal sin (*capitale crimen*) in the presence of the saint, whom he recognised as the succourer of his body and mind, his wife also and a deacon being present, are very suggestive as reminding us of the soul-friend (*anamchara*) of the Irish penitential system and of that of more primitive times.[3] Amon's sin—whatever it may have been—was known only to himself and to God. It had not, therefore, been followed by excommunication. Nevertheless he made a semi-public confession of it, and by way of penance voluntarily undertook a vow of perpetual asceticism, which carried with it the renunciation of marital relationship and earthly possessions. In short he became a monk. His conduct accords in every particular with what we know of the Church's discipline as it was administered and accepted in the fifth century.[4] No mention is made of absolution, but it is noteworthy that Amon and his family, together with Umbraphel and his

[1] Chap. XLIV.
[2] *Christian Worship*, p. 372, n.
[3] Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 147 *et seq.* Mrs. J. Concannon's *Life St. Columban*, p. 147 *et seq.*
[4] Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, pp. 435–436.

family, who had also in like manner renounced the world, accompanied the saint on his return to Dubricius, at that time keeping Lent in the monastery. The bishop welcomed them courteously and lovingly afforded consolation to the two brothers, from which it may perhaps be inferred that, at his hands, they received formal reconciliation and recognition on the following Maundy Thursday.[1]

The theft of the crosier and the fire at Dol after St. Samson's death call attention to the saint's use of two pastoral staves, one of them embellished with gold, silver and precious stones, apparently for use on great occasions, and the other a walking staff. The use of the *cambuta* by Irish bishops and the craftsmen's skill in adorning it appear at a very early date.[2] At Rome the crosier was unknown. As Mgr. Duchesne remarks: "When the episcopal crosier, with its very natural symbolism, had been everywhere adopted, it was a cause of surprise that the Pope, the shepherd of shepherds, was the only one not to make habitual use of the pastoral staff." [3]

Brittany

It may be useful to give a brief sketch of the country to which St. Samson directed his steps after his consecration as bishop. The poverty of its literary remains makes this a matter of considerable difficulty. Until the beginning of the fifth century the history of the Armorican peninsula is bound up with that of the

[1] Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 439. [2] Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

[3] It is curious that whereas the Irish word for priest is *sagart* (*sacerdos*) and the Welsh word *ofeiriad* (from *offerre*) and the Cornish word *offeriat*, the Breton word is *belek*, Armorican *baclec*, which Professor Loth derives from *baclac*, one who carries a staff. *L'Émigration Bretonne*, p. 91.

Tractus Armoricanus. In order to determine, therefore, the ecclesiastical organisation as it existed before the ninth century, it has been proposed [1] to identify and locate the provinces and dioceses of Armorica by means of the *Notitia dignitatum*, a document compiled at the beginning of the fourth century. This document gives the divisions and subdivisions of the Roman Empire for the purposes of civil and military administration. Generally speaking, the State religion of pagan Rome was regulated by Augustus on the lines of political convenience, and its hierarchy distributed and assigned rank in conformity with the size and importance of the town or province. When Christianity was officially recognised by Constantine in 323 and established as the State religion in 392, the same course seems to have been followed. The great towns or provinces which had a flamen, or arch-priest, were those which subsequently became the provinces of archbishops, and the civitates the dioceses of bishops. By applying this principle it was thought by modern students that the *Notitia* would afford a sure means of identifying the ancient Gallo-Roman bishoprics of Armorica. But it has been shown that many civitates never became bishoprics,[2] and therefore the principle must be accepted with caution. The *Notitia* informs us that the Tractus Armoricanus et Nervicanus consisted of five provinces, and that of those five provinces it was the Provincia Lugdunensis Tertia which embraced the nine civitates of North-western Gaul, including the Armorican peninsula. The nine civitates were the metropolis civitas Turonorum and the eight civitates of the Cenomanni, Redones, Andecavi, Namnetes, Curiosolitæ, Veneti, Ossismi and Diablintes. If the above principle uni-

[1] By Longnon (*Cités gallo-romaines de Bretagne*) and others.
[2] Loth, *L'Émigration Bretonne*, pp. 49, 50.

versally held good there ought to be nine bishoprics corresponding to the several civitates. The territory of the Turoni (Tours), Cenomanni (Le Mans), Andecavi (Angers) lay outside the peninsula; that of the Redones, Namnetes and Veneti is rightly identified with Rennes, Nantes and Vannes. Jublains indicates the territory of the Diablintes, who were therefore partially, if not wholly, outside the peninsula. There remain the Curiosolitæ, whose situation is revealed in the name of the town of Corseult [1] near Dinan, and the Ossismi, who occupied the westernmost portion of the peninsula.[2] Julius Cæsar [3] describes the territory of the Redones as maritime. It is therefore not improbable that they occupied, not only the wide stretch of country bounded on the south by the Namnetes, on the west by the Curiosolitæ and Veneti, and on the east by the Andecavi and Diablintes, but also the narrow neck of land which lies between the Couesnon and the Rance.

There is also a little uncertainty respecting the territory of the Curiosolitæ. For Curiosolitae some manuscripts of the *Notitia* read Corisopites. Moreover, since the middle of the ninth century the bishops of Quimper have styled themselves Corisopitensis. The explanation may be that a branch of the Curiosolitæ settled on the seaboard between the Elorn and the Ellé.

All attempts made by modern writers to provide bishops for the Curiosolitæ and Ossismi have been in vain. The only bishoprics in Armorica when the tide of emigration set in from Britain were those of Nantes, founded some time before 374, Rennes founded in 461, and Vannes founded in 465. There is good reason to

[1] Abundant evidence of this town's importance in Gallo-Roman times has been furnished by antiquarian research.

[2] Pomponius Mela, describing the island of Sena (*hodie*, Sein), says that it lies *Ossismiacis adversa littoribus*.

[3] *De Bello Gallico*, II, c. 34.

believe that the inhabitants of the more remote civitates were chiefly pagan. The discovery, however, of Roman remains—roads, milestones, coins and ruins—afford evidence of a considerable population which had probably dwindled and deteriorated soon after, if not before, the Roman legions were withdrawn.

The exodus from Britain to Armorica commenced during the first half of the fifth century and continued for upwards of a century and a half. The emigrants were mainly composed of Dumnonii from what is now known as Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, and Cornovii from the country which lies between the mouth of the Severn and the Dee.

The transformation of Armorica, astonishing in its rapidity and completeness, cannot be better described than in the words of one who has made the subject a life study : [1]—" In the middle of the sixth century, name, language, customs—everything is changed. The country is called Brittany : a Celtic language is heard in it. It is not a slow infiltration of strangers : it is an inundation. In the fifth century there is no question of Bretons : in the middle of the sixth they are masters of the larger portion of the peninsula.. There are no longer Curiosolitæ or Ossismi. In the north, from the Couesnon as far as the Elorn, are Dumnonian Bretons. South of the Dumnonians as far as the Ellé, and thence following the course of the hills to the centre of the peninsula, are Cornovian Bretons. East of the Cornovii on the left bank of the Ellé a war-like population, having no other name than that of Bretons, whose waves already beat against the town of Vannes, whose vanguard has crossed the Vilaine and spread itself along the seaboard as far as the Loire and firmly planted itself in the country of Guérande, will give to the country of Vannes

[1] Loth, *L'Émigration Bretonne*, p. 93.

ARMORICA
4th. Century.
OSISMI
(Elorn R.)
Vorgium
CORISOPITES
Corisopitum
I. Sena
VENETI
Venetum
(Vilaine R.)
CURIOSOLITAE
Curiosium
Rance R.
REDONES
Redonum
(Couesnon R.)
DIABLINTES
ANDECAVI
NAMNETES
Liger R.
Namnetum

BRITANY
6th Century.
S. POL DE LÉON
TREGUIER
DOL
DOMNONEE
CORNOUAILLES
QUIMPER
VANNES
S. BRIEUC
S. MALO
RENNES
NANTES
Sein
Elorn R.
Quimper R.
Vilaine R.
Loire R.
Nantes
Vannes
Rennes
Dol
Couesnon R.
Rance R.
St. Brieuc
Treguier
S. Pol de Leon

the name of their most illustrious leader, the name of Bro Waroch, the country of Waroch. This new population seems to breathe only war and plunder. The towns have disappeared. The chiefs are seen in the thick forest, from which at every moment they spring forth to make attacks on the territory of the Namnites and the Redones. The Bretons of Waroch engage the Franks in a desperate struggle which will continue with alternating success and failure until the ninth century, and will end in decisive victory for the Bretons under Nominoë."

The invaders brought with them, not only their language and traditions, but also a form of Christianity which was peculiarly their own. In the matter of doctrine there was no difference from that of the rest of Christendom; but the spread of monasticism among the Celts had been rapid, and the influence which it had exerted was shown in the intensely monastic character of the episcopate. A Celtic bishop was a monk whose seat was in the monastery, over which he ruled as abbat, and the limits of his episcopal jurisdiction co-extensive with the sphere of influence of the monastery. The clergy who accompanied or followed the successive bands of emigrants were probably all under vows.

The founders of the Breton bishoprics were all monks of British origin. St. Samson of Demetia left Cornwall soon after his consecration, which took place in or about the year 521. He founded the monastery bishopric of Dol. His fellow-student at Llantwit, Pol Aurelian, a native of South Wales, founded a similar bishopric at Léon in 530; St. Tutwall, of British Dumnonia, that of Tréguier; St. Brieuc, of Cardigan, that of St. Brieuc, and St. Corentin, the son of a British emigrant, that of Quimper, in the sixth century; and St. Malo of Gwent hat of St. Malo at Aleth in the seventh century.

No permission was apparently sought or obtained from the Archbishop of Tours, within whose province, geographically at least, they were situated, for the erection of these monastic bishoprics. The British bishops and priests had come to minister to the spiritual needs of their compatriots and paid little heed to the joints and bands by means of which the Church as a whole was co-ordinated and held together. Before they left Britain the gulf which separated regulars and seculars had been widening. Gildas has not a good word to say of the latter. The Breton schism was an inevitable result, even if the relations between the settlers and the Gallo-Roman population had been amicable. The great Gallo-Roman monastery of Redon was never episcopal in character: the Celtic monasteries were. Political turmoil and Breton aggressiveness only served to stereotype the plan and purpose of the missionaries. It is true that in 461 Mansuetus *episcopus Britannorum*—probably an Irish emigrant—attended the Council held at Tours, and that St. Samson himself attended a similar one held at Paris, and signed his name among the bishops, between 556 and 573. Nevertheless the Breton Church was practically independent from the sixth until the ninth century.

The course of events is interesting because it throws light on the similar problem which had to be faced by the Mother Church in Wales and Cornwall after the arrival of St. Augustine in the year 597.

From time to time the Archbishop of Tours attempted to exercise jurisdiction over the Breton Church. In the early years of the sixth century he issued a monition to two Breton priests through the Bishop of Rennes. In 567 he commanded the Breton Church not to ordain bishops without his consent; but in this case the command probably had regard to Rennes, Vannes and Nantes.

Gregory of Tours ignored the Breton Church altogether and regarded the Bretons as little better than savages. From his day until the ninth century no attempt was made to exercise provincial discipline. The provincial authority ceased to function. In the meantime the Breton Church developed her organisation. Dol naturally took precedence as one of the earliest, perhaps the earliest in point of date, and admittedly the most venerable by reason of the superior holiness of its founder, the cult of whom was already beginning to shine forth in the sixth century among many both Bretons and Romans.[1] The primacy of the Bishop of Dol was a natural result. Whether archiepiscopal claims were actually asserted is uncertain. The events which led to the freedom of Brittany under Nominoë brought into prominence the Celtic aspirations for ecclesiastical as well as national independence. Breton unity could only be secured by the recognition of a king on the one hand and of an archbishop on the other, both of whom must be free from the suspicion of Frankish influence. Nominoë solved the problem. He procured the sacring of himself as king at the hands of the Archbishop of Dol.[2] This necessitated the deposition of four if not five bishops, who were unfavourable to his pretensions, on a charge of simony. The result was a violent and protracted controversy concerning the metropolitan rights of the Bishop of Dol.

In 850 a Council, held at Paris, charged Nominoë with plundering, stealing and burning, and at the end

[1] *Life of St. Samson*, Part II, chap. xi. By Romans the writer of the *Vita* means those who lived outside Brittany.

[2] The authority for this statement is the Chronicle of Nantes, a document compiled in the middle of the eleventh century. The writer of it was a staunch advocate of Tours and may have exaggerated the part which Nominoë played in ecclesiastical affairs.

of a letter of unadulterated abuse added: "Thou wilt have to answer at God's judgment seat and that soon. Thou art old, repent; or, assuredly, thou wilt go to hell."

Nine years later a Council held at Savonnières called upon Festien, Archbishop of Dol, Wernarius of Rennes, Garurbrius of St. Brieuc or Tréguier, and King Salamon of Brittany to respect the metropolitan authority of Tours; and, in the following year, Pope Nicholas I wrote to Salamon declaring all the Breton bishops to be suffragans of Tours. The Pope's letter necessarily invited a full and complete examination of all facts and circumstances connected with the Breton archbishopric. The appellate jurisdiction of the Roman bishop in the West had never been disputed. Appeals from provincial councils lay to the Roman court.

In 865 the Pope, in answer to a letter from King Salamon requesting him to send the pallium to his brother and fellow-bishop Festien who presided over the Church of St. Samson,[1] replied that before bestowing so high a favour it would be necessary for the candidate to furnish him with the documents which had accompanied its bestowal upon Festien's predecessors, also a profession of faith and of submission to the chair of Peter. The documents were to be dispatched by an envoy selected from among Festien's clergy. An envoy was sent but nothing came of the mission.

Salamon repeated his request in the following year, and the Pope returned answer that the documents had not been furnished and requested the king to send them if he had any to send. Thereupon Festien, who had hitherto been silent, addressed Nicholas and received a

[1] *Ut pallium fratri et coepiscopo nostro Festiniano qui ecclesiæ Samsonis præesse dinoscitur.* The words are the Pope's, though he may have been quoting from Salamon's letter.

rebuke in which he was ordered to attach himself to Tours, his true metropolis. In his letter Festien had apparently informed the Holy Father that Restoals [1] and a certain Juthmael had received the pallium. For in his reply the Pope states that he has consulted the history (*gesta*) of the Popes and can find no evidence of it. Nevertheless he is prepared to receive delegates from Tours and a statement of the grounds upon which Festien claims to exercise the power and to assume the title of archbishop. In 886 a Council held at Soissons dispatched a letter by the hands of Actard, Bishop of Nantes and an ardent supporter of Tours, in which they alleged that for the space of twenty years (!) the Breton bishops had neglected attendance at Tours and had had no Metropolitan to consecrate their bishops. They called attention to the fact that Salacon their true bishop was still living, and that their bishops owed their positions to the Duke of the Bretons, who in the matter had acted like a barbarian chieftain.

Pope Nicholas died in the year 867 and his successor was an ardent friend of the Church of Tours. The Breton Church, however, did not abandon its claim. The style of archbishop continued to be used [2] by the

[1] Up to this point the negotiations were irreproachable. When, however, we find the eighth Archbishop of Canterbury, Bertoald, claimed by Festien as a predecessor we are led to suspect his *bona fides*, even if the entry in the Pontifical reads *Bertoaldum Britanniæ archiepiscopum*. M. Paul Fournier connects the author of this attempted imposition with the forger of the False Decretals (see Gougaud, *Chrétientés*, p. 133).

[2] The Chronicle of Nantes describes Wichoen and Guinguené as Archbishops of Dol. Under the name and style of Juthoven archiepiscopus, Wichoen attested a grant of patronage to Landevennec by Alain Barbetorte between 944 and 952. It is worthy of notice that after Alain's death the grant was confirmed by Thibaud, Count of Blois, *Joseph, Archbishop of Tours*, and Foulque, Count of Anjou. Did Joseph confirm it as Metropolitan or as Bishop of Tours? A portion of the patronage was within the diocese of Tours.

Bishops of Dol until 1075, when Juthael was expelled for simony. Gregory VII, with a view to establish order and to give indisputable authority to his nominee, consecrated Even archbishop and bestowed on him the pallium. Even was the first to receive this distinction. In 1093 Urban II, in 1109 Paschal, and in 1155 Alexander III granted the pallium to the Archbishop of Dol. It was not until 1199 that Innocent III pronounced a definitive sentence disallowing the archiepiscopal claims of the church of St. Samson.

Brittany by the end of the tenth century had become a nation of considerable political importance. It was its misfortune to be situated between two more powerful nations, both of which coveted possession of its territory and in default of possession were anxious to use it as a cat's-paw. In the political complications which ensued Dol was more than once the scene of action. In 1075 William the Conqueror besieged Dol, which was successfully held for forty days by Alain Fergent, son of Duke Hoel V of Brittany. On the approach of the French, King William withdrew. Ten years later Alain, who had now succeeded his father as duke, defended Dol a second time against William, and, on this occasion, so valiantly, that the Conqueror, despairing of success, made peace with Alain and gave him his daughter Constance in marriage.

The marriage of Duke Conan III to Matilda, daughter of Henry I of England, and the betrothal of Constance, only daughter of Conan IV, to Geoffrey, third son of Henry II of England, after a disastrous war, secured the annexation of Brittany. Henry II maintained the archiepiscopal claims of Dol, exercising his right of patronage in favour of Norman ecclesiastics. He appointed Roland III archbishop, and his nominee was made a cardinal in 1184, the cathedral of St. Samson

being arrayed in purple for the first and last time. Geoffrey, who had been made Duke of Brittany, died in 1186, Roland III in 1187, and Henry II in 1189. Brittany was lost to England by the futile policy of King John. Pope Innocent III, influenced by political considerations, as we have said, finally decided the question of the archbishopric by an adverse sentence in 1199. The bishopric survived until 1799, when it was suppressed.

Dol Cathedral remains. It is an impressive old building of grey granite, the greater part of it of the thirteenth century. The parapets of the north side are battlemented, a feature not to be found elsewhere in the churches of France. The English character of the cathedral's design is also noteworthy. The porch on the south side stands out from the main building and is beautifully decorated with bas-reliefs. In other respects, with the exception of the windows, the cathedral is severe in style, with little ornament. Inside, the triforium and clerestory are lofty and plain. The chancel is more ornate, and a magnificent window at the east end retains its lovely blue thirteenth-century glass. Beneath, in the Lady Chapel, the glass is golden. Scenes from the life of St. Samson are among the subjects treated in the medallions. The church is dedicated to St. Magloire and St. Samson. In a double sense St. Magloire and St. Samson were cousins-german, two brothers having married two sisters. Both were disciples of St. Iltut, and both had a share in the founding of the monastery of Dol. Magloire succeeded Samson in the bishopric, from which he retired for the sake of solitude. Budoc, who succeeded Magloire as bishop, wished to keep him in the neighbourhood, but being importuned by a count whom he had cured of leprosy Magloire sailed over to Jersey, where he built a monastery

for sixty-two religious, and there he remained until his death.

The Book of Llandaff informs us that during his residence at Dol, St. Samson received a visit from St. Teilo and welcomed him with joy, both having been born in the same district and being men who spoke the same tongue.[1]

In 1859, when the chapel of St. Samson underwent repair, the parish priest, M. Chevrier, caused the Merovingian sarcophagus, supposed to be that of St. Samson, to be removed to the garden of the presbytery in order to put an end to superstitious practices connected with it. It remains there and serves as a wash-house to the rectory household.[2]

Besides the cathedral some of the houses at Dol, now a small town of some 4000 inhabitants, afford evidence of fourteenth and fifteenth century work, and are so constructed as to provide arcades by the projection of their upper storeys.

The cult of St. Samson became general in Celtic countries soon after the saint's death, and from Britain no less than from Brittany numerous pilgrimages were made to his sarcophagus at Dol. His fame spread to Switzerland and Italy; the monastery of Urano in Ravenna possessed relics of him. He was revered by our Anglo-Saxon kings. Edward the Elder became a member of the Confraternity of St. Samson, and his son Athelstan acquired by purchase relics of Breton saints,[3] and among them an arm of St. Samson and his cross.[4] These were carried in procession before Athelstan's

[1] Occurrit ei cum gaudio nam de una regione procreati fuerunt et unius linguæ viri.

[2] Abbé Duine, *Saints de Domnonée*, pp. 11, 12.

[3] William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum*, c. vi.

[4] Abbé Duine, *Le Schisme Breton*, p. 15.

body on the day of his burial. Churches were built in his honour both in Cornwall and in Brittany.

The cult of saints and veneration of relics is still a marked feature of the religious life of Brittany. Pardons and pilgrimages furnish frequent opportunities for the purpose, and the religious plays which sometimes accompany them are often deeply impressive. From the first Christianity in all countries has made fruitful use of native religious sentiment and observance by adapting and consecrating them to a higher purpose. In no country in Europe has she drawn so freely from pre-Christian sources for the development and popular character of her worship as in Brittany. Legends connected with certain places, stones and events, ancient customs, have here, as in Cornwall, survived, interwoven with religion, some of them of pagan origin. The New Religion in Brittany took possession of legends and monuments and turned them to its own uses. It is possible, therefore, that in the Life of St. Samson we may detect traces of this economy, as we certainly do of autocthonous animism in the incident which it records of the unconverted natives of Trigg. A survival of this may be found in the cure of rheumatism attributed to the holed stone (*mên-an-tol*) of Bosullow Moor in West Cornwall.

The folk-lore of Brittany is in extent paralleled by that of Cornwall.[1] The Celt still keeps alive, by means of oral tradition, the lessons, warnings, wisdom and customs of his forefathers. In the Life of St. Samson it is possible that folk-lorists may be able to throw light upon the silver rods presented by the saint's father by way of gratitude for the promise of a son. To them the whole story of the saint's life will be full of suggestion,

[1] Compare, *e.g.*, the stories founded on folk-lore by Anatole le Braz with Bottrell's collection.

no less than to liturgiologists who wish to compare Celtic ritual with Roman.

. . . . . .

The reader of the Life will find many and various points of like interest in a work which, written at the beginning of the seventh century, in the style of its language and in the treatment of its subject reflects the religious temper of the age. If the translator has in some measure caught the spirit of its author he may venture to hope that he will not altogether fail in communicating it to the reader. He gratefully acknowledges the kindness of his old friend and school-fellow, the Rev. F. W. Paul, M.A., in going through the translation, in correcting mistakes and offering valuable suggestions. No translation of the *Vita Samsonis* has hitherto appeared in English.[1] Some very useful notes have been published by the Abbé Duine, Professor Loth and M. Fawtier, of which advantage has been taken in the preparation of the present work, but the translator has naturally followed his own judgment, and in some instances has felt compelled to reject the suggestions of those wiser than himself.

The student who is led to consult the Latin text will realise the difficulty of reconciling the construction of the sentences and the use of moods, tenses and words with the rules of grammar and composition which he learnt at school. The anonymous author's excessive use of the participle, the present participle for the past, and vice versa, his use of *se* for *illum*, *sibi* for *illi* and *suus* for *ejus*, are perhaps the most noticeable examples.[2] His

[1] Or in any other modern language so far as the writer is aware.

[2] For a more detailed treatment of the language of the *Vita* the student is referred to L'Abbé Duine's *Questions d'Hagiographie*, pp. 46–51.

flamboyant expressions of respect for Bishop Tigernomalus are distinctively Merovingian and a proof of the date of the work. The pretentious language, inflated style and involved sentences are his own, and however strongly they may be criticised or ridiculed, it cannot be denied that they nevertheless possess a certain charm. All whose delight is in whatsoever things are lovely and of good report—old and young, learned and unlearned alike—will be drawn to the old writer, who, throughout his narrative, at a time when manners were coarse and language equally unrestrained, never offends in the slightest degree. In the much-criticised sermon which here appears as the Second Book, however redundant and fantastic his modes of expression, he keeps one lesson steadily in view—a lesson as much needed now as when the sermon was composed—the lesson that the best way of honouring the saints is by imitating their virtues.

The approximate date of the Life has been given as between 610 and 615. M. Fawtier, who, however, does not accept the anonymous writer's statements respecting its authorship and provenance, has diligently examined the eight extant versions of it and has traced them all, with one exception, to that adopted by the Benedictines in the *Acta Sanctorum Sancti Benedicti*, and by the Bollandists in their *Acta Sanctorum*. He regards the remaining version (P 1), which was made a little subsequent to the year 850 by a monk of Penetal and which was edited and issued by Dom Plaine in 1885, as a much-mishandled redaction of the original version. Among these eight versions he includes the account given of our saint in the *Vita Dubricii*,[1] which states that St. Samson became Archbishop of York. This statement rests upon no foundation whatever. L'Abbé Duine attributes the

[1] British Museum, MS. Cotton Vespasian, A xiv.

fiction to Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose *Historia Regum Britanniæ* was dedicated to Robert, Earl of Gloucester, the representative of a Breton family from Dol which acquired the fee of Monmouth as the result of the Norman Conquest. The spread of the cult of St. Samson would doubtless be equally gratifying to Geoffrey and his patron. If, as seems not improbable, the name Samson was actually found in the list of the early archbishops, of the northern province, Geoffrey was not the man to hesitate, when it suited his purpose, to identify him with St. Samson of Dol.

M. Fawtier has placed students under a deep obligation by carefully collating all the various manuscripts of the parent version. He has found and examined no less than twenty such manuscripts, and has placed the various readings as footnotes to his edition of the Metz manuscript [1] made by different hands in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the provenance of which is given as the monastery of St. Arnoul de Metz.[2] That used by the Benedictines and Bollandists was apparently copied in the seventeenth century by Jacobus de Lanvy, and the original is now lost.

In making the present translation I have used the *Acta Sanctorum* and M. Fawtier's published transcript, and have availed myself of those variants which have seemed to express best the author's meaning, giving the Latin at the foot of the page. In a few instances, where the sense seemed to require it, or where some copyist may be suspected of an error in transcription, I have submitted a reading of my own and explained why I have to do so.

The reader will rightly conclude that I have accepted the work of the anonymous writer as that of Henoc's

[1] Fawtier. *La Vie de Saint Samson*, pp. 82–88.
[2] *Ibid.*

nephew, who wrote it at the beginning of the seventh century and gave a truthful account of the sources whence he obtained his information.

It has been already stated that we have no literature relating to our own country of approximately the same date as the Life, save the *De Excidio* of Gildas, which was written about three-quarters of a century before the ancient *Vita Samsonis*. We have, however, in Cornwall especially, a large number of Celtic crosses and memorials which were erected at and about the date of St. Samson's visit. We have also a church [1] and parish which bear the saint's name near Fowey, and another church, that of Southill, which is dedicated to him. There was formerly a chapel in Padstow parish dedicated to St. Samson and Cadoc, which was granted by King Henry VIII in 1545 to Nicholas Prideaux.

Of the value of the Life, its authenticity and authorship being accepted, there can be no question. As far as the present treatment of it is concerned, to use our author's words: *Poscimus quisque es qui hunc legis librunculum mea me imperitia habeas excusatum.*

[1] It is this church of which mention is made in the romance of *Tristan and Iseult*, which assumed literary form in the twelfth century. The poet gives a wonderful picture of what could never have been a religious establishment of great importance :—

S'en vont au moustier Saint Sanson
La roïne et tuit li baron
En sont trestuit ensenble alé
Evesque, clerc, moine et abé
Encontre lié sont tuit issu.
D'aubes, de chapes revestu.
Roman de Tristan, lines 2973–2978.

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THE LIFE OF ST. SAMSON

IN THE NAME OF THE HOLY TRINITY, HERE BEGIN THE CHAPTERS OF THE LIFE OF SAINT SAMSON

Of the goodness which was shown on his behalf before he was born.
Of the consolation of the sorrowing mother declared by an angel to a priest.
Of the heavenly promise on his account before he was conceived.
Of his noble parents.
Of Samson's childhood.
Of his spiritual mirth.
Of the zeal of Samson's mother.
Of the warning which was sent by an angel against (vain) desires in regard to Samson.
Of Eltut, the master.
Of his learning.
Of Eltut's determination, revealed by God, on behalf of Samson.
Of the facility for reading—God's gift to Samson.
Of the youthful fasting of Samson.
Of the prudence of his master.
Of the deep problem in which St. Samson was tested along with his master.
Of the solution of the same problem, sent from heaven.
Of the brother saved by Samson from the viper's bane.

Of Samson's diligence in the Lord.
Of Samson's diaconate.
Of the two brothers' envy of Samson.
Of the presbyterate of the same.
Of the poison which St. Samson drinks without harm.
Of the demoniac saved by Samson.
Of a certain brother's penitence towards Samson.
Of Samson's departure for an island.
Of Samson's father and uncle and of his mother and mother's sister.
Of their good conversation.
Of the sorceress destroyed by Samson's words.
Of the brother restored from the bane of the sorceress.
Of the serpent done to death by Samson.
Of the good work wrought by him in Ireland.
Of the good work which was done by Samson.
Of Samson's abbotship.
Of the eremitical life of Samson.
Of Samson's vision.
Of the episcopate of the same.
Of the idol destroyed by Samson.
Of the serpent cast into the sea in Britain.
Of Samson's journey to Europe.
Of the building of churches by Samson.
Of the setting free of Judual and the victory won by Samson with the help of God.
Of the countless and splendid works which God wrought in Europe by Samson.

HERE BEGINS THE PROLOGUE TO THE LIFE OF SAINT SAMSON

I.—URGED by the deeds of men of religion and that from my inmost heart, and, forasmuch as very many of the fathers in their understanding and perceptions, both in their active and especially in their contemplative life shine like the stars of heaven to help us, I made a study of their entire character, both of body and mind, with a somewhat penetrating and keen eye as far as mere man could. And when I had considered my own poverty and insufficiency, forsooth an ignoramus of these latter days, one with little understanding and still less accurate knowledge of the very extensive records of the Holy Scriptures, on this account I trembled as being unworthy of that task of mine which thou, enlightened from above in thy spiritual judgment, O most blessed Tigernomalus,[1] bishop of an apostolic see,[2] hast asked me to undertake. It is therefore with the witness of a warped conscience before me, and in the presence of Almighty God, that I plead that I am unworthy of and unfitted for the work; knowing that, as it is of the nature of human infirmity to make a great display and to be lifted up at the beck of

[1] The name Tigernomalus occurs on a stone discovered in the tower of Cubert Church, Cornwall, and now built into its western wall, near the south-west corner. The stone is of sixth or seventh century date and reads CONECTOCI FILI TIGERNOMALUS. A Tigernomaglus was a companion of Paul Aurelian; but on linguistic grounds Prof. Loth is not fully convinced that the names are identical.—*St. Samson de Dol*, p. 18.

[2] Gildas uses the term apostolic see for episcopal see: *sedem Petri Apostoli immundis pedibus usurpantis.—De Excidio*, No. 66.

pride, many men act presumptuously and imprudently and amidst the waves of this world heedlessly strive to swim towards that which they cannot attain, and are driven hither and thither owing to the uncertain fickleness of their minds; but when they have been checked in their perverse ways they are brought back to that to which they can attain. And so those winged creatures, of which we read in the first vision of the holy priest Ezechiel, having four wings, with one pair above for raising themselves and with the others for covering the body, doubtless represent all holy persons who, although in the course of their activities on man's behalf are by custom raised on high, yet, knowing their weaknesses in sight of the tremendous majesty of Almighty God, cover such virtues as they have with the garment of modesty and fear. I, indeed, fired by the promise of the Holy Spirit and by some spark of an enlightened knowledge, although I am unworthy of this duty, yet, stirred by thy appeals, will make my insufficiency a willing offering to thy pleasure and suggestion. And so thou dost command, O man most dear, that I furnish a brief statement in catholic and true terms of the history and sayings of St. Samson. And though apprehensive of the toil and deep delving involved in the work, yet to guard against disobedience I will certainly address myself to that to which I am invited by thy holy words under the inspiration of Almighty God.

II.—And first of all I wish it to be believed that these words are not put together on the lines of rash surmisings of my own, or of those of confused and unauthorised rumours; but on what I derived from a certain religious and venerable old man whose house beyond the sea Samson himself had founded.[1] And he,

[1] *In cujus domo quam ipse solus Samson fundaverat.* See *Revue Celtique*, Vol. XXXIX, 34.

leading a catholic and religious life there, for nearly eighty years, in times most approximate to those of the aforesaid St. Samson, and being himself a cousin of St. Samson and a deacon, truthfully assured me that St. Samson's mother had handed (the information) to his uncle, a most holy deacon, who himself was cousin to St. Samson, and (the old man) kindly related to me many particulars of the saint's wonderful career. And not only so, but also very many and delightful accounts of the amazing deeds which he performed on this side of the sea, in Brittany and in Romania, and those which the said holy deacon, Henoc by name, had brought from beyond the sea, did the venerable old man, of whom we have already spoken, who lived with me in this monastery, cause them continually to read piously and attentively before me.[1] And so I have not thought it fitting that I should seek to consign to oblivion the incomparable work of fortitude achieved through the holy, illustrious, yea most holy man Samson.

III.—Nevertheless, for two reasons I had not dared to provide a record of those miracles so holy, nay, rather, so glorious and transcendent, wrought by the abovementioned man at God's command, unless thy holy and prudent counsel had lent encouragement to my slender ability. The first reason is, because I adjudged myself clearly unworthy, as being hindered by my sins, and also unequal to deal with a history so important as this is;

[1] The text as it stands is as follows :—*et non solum hoc sed etiam quamplura ac delicata de ejus prodigiosioribus actibus, quæ citra mare in Britannia ac Romana mirabiliose fecit, verba, supradictus sanctus diaconus, Henocus nomine, congruis stilis polite ultra mare adportavit, et ille, de quo nuper præfati sumus, venerabilis senex semper ante me in istud monasterium (isto monasterio) commanens pie legere ac diligenter faciebat.* This would seem to assert that Henoc brought from Britain to the monastery at Dol an account of the things which had happened in Brittany, which is absurd. Professor Loth has proposed to insert *et quæ* between *verba* and *supradictus*. This emendation is here accepted.

and because, as I am the oldest of them all, I wished to escape from the detractions of the other brothers and the opinions of those who think differently, lest, as frequently happens, in the treatment of so many unheard-of things I should be accused of inaccurate statements, not only by some who are experienced, but also, as is oftener the case, by those who are ignorant, presumptuous and inconsiderate. And the second reason is that in the brief space of this last stage of my life I feared to enter upon the task, believing it to be as difficult to accomplish, as its subject-matter, as I have already said, will be held by some to be incredible. But, O most blessed father,[1] having in thee one who supports the undertaking and indeed one who wishes to be a reader and a hearer, I could not refuse to declare what in my recollection I held to be true concerning this illustrious and holy man.

IV.—And, lest these things which I have committed to writing should be doubted of by some, I call Christ the Saviour of us all to witness that I have not undertaken to hand down this very brief narrative to posterity from any fallible, erroneous, or uncertain conjecture of its truth, but from the statements of most holy and thoroughly competent men, and also from most accurate and elaborate statements which I found in the same monastery, written in a true and catholic spirit by the above-mentioned deacon, gathering a few things from many, provided only these were not wearisome to read but useful, and such as, with God's help, might be set forth with profit. At the beginning of our work, however, let us pray that the help of our Lord Jesus Christ may be ours, whose merits and mighty works are

[1] *Beatissime papa.* The term "papa," or pope, was not restricted to the bishops of Rome until the time of Gregory VII (1073–1085).

manifest and wonderful in His saints throughout the whole world, in order that, to me a poor, unworthy and more than sinner, He may deign to grant a fair and prosperous voyage to that bourne I wish to reach, not because I deserve it, but for the sake of a man of such renown.

THE PROLOGUE ENDS.

HERE BEGINS THE LIFE OF SAINT SAMSON THE CONFESSOR OF JESUS CHRIST WHO IS COMMEMORATED ON THE 28TH OF JULY

I. SAINT SAMSON, then, was of the country of Demetia,[1] and as regards worldly rank was born of distinguished and noble parents. But, in order that the generations to come may certainly admire him as a priest of God, I do not think silence should be kept of that miracle which Almighty God deigned to show concerning him before he was conceived in his mother's womb. For this first token of the honour bestowed on him, or rather before he was born, was indeed a wonderful one. The father of the same St. Samson was, as I have said, of Demetian stock, Amon by name, and his mother, of Dwent,[2] the next province to Demetia, Anna by name. In the providence of Almighty God they were honourably married by mutual agreement and with the common consent of their fathers, who were of the same station in life. Moreover, we certainly know that the parents of the same married couple were court officials of the kings of their respective provinces, as indeed we undoubtedly find it so recorded in other amended transactions[3] of the same St. Samson, and moreover in similar works. Also I have heard on many occasions at the singing of Mass the individual names of both parents read

[1] *Dyfed*, which embraced the counties of Caermarthen, Cardigan and Pembroke.

[2] Dwent = Gwent = Monmouthshire.

[3] For *Gestæ emendatioræ* see Fawtier, *Vie de Saint Samson*, p. 36.

out at the altar of St. Samson, among the names of those by whom the offering was made.[1] Amon indeed, the father of the same St. Samson, had a brother, Umbraphel, and moreover Anna, the mother of the same saint, had a sister, Afrella by name, both good brothers, both good sisters, born, as it would seem, of good parents. Moreover, Umbraphel, the younger brother of Amon, with the consent and approval of their parents, took to wife Afrella, sister of the above-mentioned Anna; and Afrella herself was younger than her above-mentioned sister.

II. Moreover, not long after they came together, as they deserved, the said Afrella peacefully conceived and bore a son. But what need is there to hide the truth? She had three sons before her sister. Anna herself indeed was now thought by all her neighbours and friends to be unfruitful and barren. Then, when the hope of children for the woman had been abandoned, not by reason of any disparity of age as compared with that of her sister, but of nature, while the parents grieved and the mother lamented with tears, the comfort of Almighty God was at hand; for Anna even gave herself to frequent alms and oftentimes to fasting, and her husband with her. Now it came to pass that on a feast-day they went together to church, and there, among the many people to be discussed,[2] they heard a discussion concerning a certain Librarius who lived in a remote land to the north, a man sought unto by many provinces because all who had resorted to him used to regard as assured whatever he might have told them. Thereupon, as many people of the church on that same day were eagerly resolving to wait upon him in order to consult him, Amon himself,

[1] Cf. Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, pp. 208–209; Reading of the Diptychs.
[2] *Jactitaretur.*

hearing these things, with a glad heart, along with his wife Anna, resolved to undertake the journey with them to the same master.

III. And it came to pass that at length, at the end of the third day when the fatigue of the journey was over, they reached the place where the master Librarius had his dwelling, and there found the aforesaid master sitting with much people and discoursing much on particular cases. Then indeed Amon, offering gifts and casting himself on his knees before him with his wife in like manner, humbly begged him to apply his mind attentively to their case. When that master had imposed silence concerning the other cases which were causing a vehement stir around him, closely questioning them as good people who had made a long journey, and smiling all the time he inquired, " O my children, tell me the reason of your toil in such a long journey." Then Amon, having opened his mouth, shut it with great joy as the master said to him, " I know the reason of your visit; it is because thy wife has hitherto been barren, and now I believe the divine pity will come to her aid, but do thou make a silver rod equal in length to thy wife and give it for her sake, and afterwards Almighty God will raise you up seed according to His will and in fulfilment of your desire." At these words Amon joyfully said, " I will give three silver rods equal in length to her."

IV. And the master, perceiving the discernment and prudence of the man, made them remain with him in his guest-chamber until they had given their poor bodies rest the following night after the fatigue of the journey. And so it happened that as she lay there God deigned to speak in a vision to the woman Anna: " O troubled one, woman strong in faith and steadfast in the love of God and instant in prayer, happy art thou, happy is thy womb and happier the fruit of thy womb. Behold, at God's

command, the firstborn son whom thou bringest forth has been found worthy of the priestly office; for thy womb shall conceive and become fruitful and bring forth a son, and its first offspring shall be seven times brighter than the silver which thy husband has given for thee to God." Thereupon the woman, rendered timid yet nevertheless glad for the greatness of the vision and for the glory of the angel of God who stood by her and spoke to her, and also for (the desire) of a hoped-for child, and especially, as is the way of good women, by reason of modesty, was unable to make any reply at all. But by way of comfort (thus) was it spoken to her by the angel, "Fear not, O woman," said he, "nor be mistrustful, for God will deign to comfort thy grief, and thy tears shall be turned unto joy for thee; behold, thou shalt have a child and thou shalt call thy firstborn son Samson; he shall be holy and a high priest before Almighty God, and thou shalt have proof of this thing in the morning at the hands of that master to whom thou hast come."

V. Awaked from sleep the woman narrated in order all the things which she had seen and heard to her husband. Now as they rejoiced, and mutually discussed (these things), the returning light of day appeared; then, in view of the long journey, they rose early and while she was making herself ready and putting on her garments, before they set forth on their journey, the master appeared rejoicing and shouting for joy. "Blessed art thou, O woman," said he, "and blessed is thy womb, and more blessed the fruit of thy womb, for this night the Lord hath deigned to reveal things concerning thee and thy offspring; for thy firstborn son is ordained by God to be a high priest,[1] and, when

[1] *summus sacerdos.*

thou shalt bring him forth, thou shalt name him Samson, and afterwards, at the proper time, thou shalt hand him over to be taught knowledge: therefore of the British race there has not been or will be anyone like him, namely as a priest, who shall be profitable to many. Thus, when they had received his blessing, they went away home happy and contented.

VI. God did not delay to fulfil His promise; and so that mother joyfully conceived, gladly bore and successfully brought forth the beloved of God, her first-born son. Then a mighty joy seized hold of their kinsmen [1] when they heard this, as they gave thanks to God because the Lord had turned in mercy towards them. The son was therefore nobly nursed, following the noble custom of his noble forefathers, and baptised by this not inappropriate name according to that which had been foretold [2] in the promise, while also the supremely happy mother urged it. She occupied [3] herself much and always by day and by night, with the purity of his childhood, yea in his play.[4] And lest, in any or even in the smallest detail, the part destined by God for the profit of many should be contaminated, divine providence wrapped him round and preserved him uninjured. For, by the coaxing and carefulness of his happy mother, his play was directed to keeping festival and to reading, and even to a pretence of writing, not in reality but in make-believe. And later on the course of events justified her course of procedure. For, when he was about five years of age, he, by himself, with all the affection of his boyish mind, very much wished to go to the school of Christ, but his father, in changed mood, with his mind thoroughly turned against the will of God and the line laid down, and above all (led)

[1] *vicinos*, "kinsmen."
[2] *sortilatum*.
[3] *satagebat*.
[4] *joci*.

by wicked counsellors and by his friends, who were quite ignorant of that secret miracle which had formerly been wrought, spoke against his son becoming a clerk, clearly regarding the office of a cleric as unworthy of his family, inasmuch as they had ever been the ministers of an earthly kingdom [1] and the bringers-up of kings; so much so, that a difference being allowed to arise between the two parents, by day and by night, they were ever disputing, while the mother's desire for her son was the better part, even that of a priest, in accordance with the testimony of the angel.

VII. But while they were considering other things, on a certain night a heavenly voice came to Amon in his sleep full of warning, in case he should dare to hold back from the course marked out for him. And as for Amon, awaked as he was from sleep by the wonder of so great a vision, a great fear fell on him, and rising from the bed and casting himself on the ground he made an act of penitence [2] for his transgression, however small and insignificant, and promised in entire faith that he would do nothing further concerning his son contrary to the will of God. Then immediately, as the day broke, without any delay, Amon caused his son to be led away to school, saying, "O wife, let us lose no time in sending our son, rather God's son, to school, for God is with him and we ought to do nothing against God," and he related everything which he had seen that night concerning him. Then she greatly rejoiced and, although at the time with child, rose from her bed and, with all her heart's affection, magnified the Lord for all His benefits which He had mercifully shown to them, and in one and the same hour, with a common purpose, they rose up together and, with a common provision for the journey, set about

[1] *regni*.
[2] *pœnitudinem gessit*, "*was filled with regret*."—Duine, *Lexique*.

conducting their son to the school [1] of the famous master of the Britons, Eltut by name. Now this Eltut was a disciple [2] of St. Germanus, and St. Germanus himself had ordained him priest in his youth.[3] And in truth Eltut was of all the Britons the most accomplished in all the Scriptures, namely of the Old and New Testaments, and in those of philosophy [4] of every kind, of geometry namely, and of rhetoric, grammar and arithmetic, and of all the theories of philosophy. And by birth [5] he was a most wise magician, having knowledge of the future. In his splendid monastery I have been, and if we allow ourselves to be led aside by his wonderful deeds, each one, we shall be led too far from our original undertaking. Nevertheless, in order to establish our point, let me declare [6] before all, one which has been related by our catholic brothers who dwelt in this place.

VIII. For when he was weighed down by mortal sickness of body, he caused two other abbats to come and visit him: one was called Isanus, the other Atoclius. And so when he saw them, greeting each according to custom, thus he began: "I rejoice," he said, "dearest brothers, at your arrival, forasmuch as the time of my departure and of my sleep in Christ is at hand, and you offer me due respect. But be of good comfort, brothers, since the heavenly message of departure from the body is equally to you, even now, and close after me; your passing indeed will be one, but the issue thereof diverse. I indeed shall be taken [7] by the hands of angels this night

[1] College of Llantwit, near Cowbridge, in Glamorganshire.
[2] *de discipulis*.
[3] If St. German died in 448 and Eltut was born in 436, this must be a mistake.
[4] *philosophia*, "science" (Duine).
[5] Was he a Druid by birth or descent?
[6] *divimamus per singula = rimamus*, "enter into detail."—Duine, *Lexique*.
[7] *percipiar*.

in your presence when it is hardly midnight; and on such wise that my brother Isanus will see my soul in the likeness of an eagle having [1] two golden wings. He will see at the same time the soul of that one in the form of an eagle indeed flying heavily forsooth, having two wings of lead; and after forty days, again, brother Isanus also himself, just as he has departed, and in like form, will come to Christ. But thou, brother Atoclius, hast greatly coveted the things of the world, and so indeed thy type of winged animal is of the world, but thou hast not the fineness of gold in thy wings because of thy avarice. Fine, of a truth, thou art by reason of thy pristine holiness preserved from thy childhood up to the present, but thou art heavy on thy wings because of the leaden weight of avarice. Nevertheless God Almighty will deign to take away these wings from thee." Discoursing of these and many like things, and calling much to mind during a day and a night, as he himself had said, when it was nearly midnight, as he bade farewell to the brothers, he departed happily from this habitation of flesh amid hymns and choruses and the accustomed solemnities. And blessed Isanus saw his soul under the seeming likeness which he himself had mentioned, and perceived the soul of the other brother in like manner as the old man had said; and with difficulty, by his endeavours, by the prayers of saints and many masses sung, was it ransomed, so that, as he and only he saw it, was it restored to something better, and absolved from the worst of its sins for ever; and he pointed out all these things to the brothers and was held in admiration of them all; and, moreover, on the appointed day, by a similar departure, he came happily to Christ according to the promise of the old man. But let me return to the subject from which I have digressed.

[1] *habentem.*

IX. On this occasion, therefore, when St. Eltut beheld with his eyes Samson the chosen child of God, as he received him from his mother's hand with the gifts which, according to custom, his parents had brought with him, he kissed him affectionately, and looking up to heaven and blessing him he began to speak as follows: "We give thanks to God, who has deigned to give light on earth by this lamp proceeding from our race, unworthy though we be. Behold the noble chief of us all, behold him who is to be a high priest, to the profit of many on this side and beyond the sea; behold the illustrious priest of all the Britons; behold the most famous of all, as a founder of churches, since the Apostles." When they heard these things his parents wished to hear more concerning him, but St. Eltut thus returned answer: "It is not my duty to tell you this, nor yours to question me; for there is a time to keep silence and there is a time to speak; now hand over to me that boy to be taught."

X. Moreover, as his parents were leaving, he himself kept by the side of the aforesaid master, not driven by any desire to weep after mother or father; but, as if he had been nourished there from his very cradle, he stayed with steadfast and delightful grace. It was wonderful the way he learnt in one and the same day the twenty letters (of the alphabet) and all the signs, and there was no need to show him any further; and, what is more wonderful than all these things, within seven days he was able, by God's revealing, to understand the meanings of these letters in the co-ordination of words; for in reading indeed, so exact was his mind that, in so far as the human reason is capable of it, he quite completely mastered all the psalms. Moreover, when he was about fifteen he exercised himself in the very frequent fasts and the longer vigils which were kept by all the brothers who lived there, so much so that when he often

tried to maintain the appointed posture,[1] sometimes even for two days, that most sensible master forbad him and said unto him, " It is not meet, little son, that the tender body of a youth, up till now in the flowering stage, should be broken by too many and ill-regulated fasts."

XI. Moreover, in regard to the deeper meanings of the Scriptures, so acute was his understanding that he was wont to seek for more in spiritual interpretations than [2] was presented to him by the aforesaid master. And it came to pass on a certain day, both he and his master came across a doubtful point in a certain deep question, and that question I know, but I omit to introduce it lest in this connection we should tarry too long; for they, though diligently studying all the treatises of the Old and New Testaments, could in no wise find the explanation. Thereupon, St. Samson determined within himself to undertake fasts and vigils until God should deign to show to him the solution of this question. Now while he prayed on the third night, at nearly midnight, he saw a light sent from heaven appear before him, and he heard a longed-for voice, out of the light, saying sweetly unto him, " Trouble not thyself further, elect of God, for, behold, not only shalt thou solve this question at which thou toilest, but whatsoever things thou shalt ask of God by prayer and fasting thou shalt obtain as thy good deserts demand." [3] Then St. Samson gave thanks to Almighty God and returned quite happy to his cell, and gently related to his master all which he had seen and heard.

XII. Now it came to pass on a certain day as the brothers went forth, one lovely morning in summer,

[1] *positiones.* [2] *quamque.*

[3] *exigentibus.* Duine detects a trace of Pelagian influence in this expression.—*Questions d'Hagiographie,* p. 35.

to take out the weeds from the crop, that a certain reptile,[1] darting[2] from a blackberry bush, bit one of the brothers in the groin and he fell to the ground and remained just alive. The brothers as they wept and prayed around him doubted not that he was going to die. Then regaining confidence they said "Let us send word of this to our Elder."[3] Therefore they dispatched a certain man, and he related the matter to the master in the presence of St. Samson. Now, while he wept, St. Samson, moved by the Holy Spirit, spake thus: "Master, command me to go to him; my father indeed is informed and experienced and able to free the man from this death of pain."[4] Then St. Eltut, as if in scorn, taking up his parable spake as follows: "In the beginning thou wast instructed in the art of Stipho,[5] and afterwards, now that thou art come to school for the discipline of Christ, thou desirest to practise it: of a truth it is not meet to practise worldly magic along with heavenly wisdom."[6] But St. Samson, smiling, even so returned answer: "Art thou not aware, elect master, that[7] I have no father except Him of whom it is spoken by the prophet,[8] 'Thy hands have made me and fashioned me'?" Thereupon the master, when he heard this, struck with wonder and amazement and not daring to act otherwise, said, "Elect of God, go." Then St. Samson went and ran and found the brother now almost at his last gasp; and, when he had sent away from

[1] *Hilider*. In the *Nova Legenda Anglie* the word is *coluber*, a snake. This word is found in the *Hisperica famina* under the form *chilydrus* (χέλυδρος).

[2] *exiliens*. [3] *seni*.

[4] *de hujus doloris nece*, deadly wound, "*blessure dangereuse*." (Duine).

[5] Other readings give Phito and Pytho. See Justin Martyr, XVIII.

[6] *sapienta* for *sapientia*.

[7] *quia* for *quod*? Job. x, 8.

him all the other brothers, he chose one very tried priest to be with him and made the sign of the Cross on the serpent bite, knowing by the grace of God that virtue was present; and for three hours, that is, from the third to the sixth hour, sending forth prayers, and blessing water mixed with oil, by the wonderful working of God he restored the brother who was almost dead safe and sound to all the brothers who were present. And that he might not be, as it were, raised in the favour of the multitude, on account of this work, to the vainglory of boasting, as is the way of human nature, he gave thanks to God and practised an ever-unwearied, and, very frequently, a stricter abstinence.

XIII. In truth his humility, and therefore courtesy and gentleness, and above all his wonderful love, beyond human measure, so to speak, was such that he was regarded by all his brothers with wonderful affection. Moreover, his master, noting his earnestness in the worship of God, and reverencing the Christ whom he perceived shining in his breast, as, for example, from the secret signs concerning him, caused the ministry of the diaconate to be entrusted to him. When Father [1] Dubricius arrived at that same house on a Sunday, he was ordained deacon by that very father with the consent and acclamation of all the brothers and also with the goodwill of God. And this matter would not be enlarged upon unless a miracle had intervened. Three brothers were ordained at the same place, two to the office of priest and he, the third, to that of deacon; but when the brothers were required, according to custom, to bend for pardon,[2] the holy father, at the same time with St. Eltut, saw a dove, sent from heaven through the open

[1] *papa*.

[2] See Duine, *Origines Britonnes*, p. 38, and Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, p. 356.

window, take its stand fixedly on high over St. Samson, not as is the way of a bird flying or flitting about, but remaining all the time without the least flutter of its wings while the ministers went to and fro everywhere throughout the church. And not only so, but also, when the bishop raised his hand over him to confirm him as a deacon, what is still more wonderful, that dove, sent, as I have said, from heaven, descended on his right shoulder and there [1] persistently stayed all the time until the entire service was finished by the bishop. This was not a matter for wonder to anyone in the Church to be sure, because it was not made visible to anyone save to them only, the bishop and the aforesaid master and one deacon who held the chalice and had sung the Gospel and prayer; yet always that same wonderful dove stayed silently over him, as the three looked on, until he received the communion of the Eucharist. In short, the bishop and master, as they discussed these things by turn between themselves, arrived at such a state of amazement that they undoubtedly thought that St. Samson was not now an earthly but a heavenly being. In truth St. Samson had grown so wonderful and, if I may so speak, so ineffable in the work of God, that from day to day, naturally rising as by a spiritual ladder higher and higher to the highest summit of religion, he was seen to emerge, by daily use, renewed and bettered.

XIV. However, Eltut had in his monastery a pupil who was also his nephew and a priest, and this priest had a brother without rank.[2] These men, alienated from the brothers in a measure in respect of love for St. Samson, doubtless by the ancient enemy of the human

[1] Eusebius relates the story of a dove which alighted on the head of Fabian in the year 250 and was recognised as divine guidance for his election to the episcopate. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, VI, 29 (3).

[2] *i. e.* not in orders.

race, who incited them by means of the worthless guerdon which envy holds out, and wickedly fearing lest, on account of one whom they knew to be better than themselves, they would be deprived of an hereditary worldly possession, could neither find any evil in him nor dwell together peaceably and lovingly. Ignoring the higher counsel of God they became deeply plunged in the lowest things. But he, knowing all about it, and nowise hiding himself from the Lord, besought Him the more on their account, and, shedding tears with his prayers, humbly entreated the Lord that (these) very wicked men might not run into the abyss of crime on his account. Ever bent on fasting and exercised in unceasing prayers, also very often immersed [1] in searching and in learning the Holy Scriptures, without any pause he went on praying, according to the exhortation of the Apostle Paul, in cold and nakedness, all night long, through wintry frosts, subdued not by the winds of winter or by the oppressive heat of summer, mindful of the Apostle's word when he says,[2] " the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

XV. Indeed not long after—the year up to the present is uncertain—as he was worthy, at the master's request and God willing, he worthily received the order of the priesthood at the hands of the same bishop who had come to admit him to the diaconate. But why do we stay longer over it? Such a sign as was seen when he received the office of the diaconate, such also appeared, as God's token of his worthiness, to the same three, and to only these by whom it had been seen on the former occasion. But, as God willed, he neither willed nor foolishly refused but accepted gratefully what God had promised. In so far as he had been placed in a higher

[1] *sensatus.* [2] Rom. viii, 18.

position to the same extent by voluntary surrender, he cultivated [1] himself by a stricter rule of abstinence according to the word of the Holy Scriptures.[2] For he studied before all things to be more humble and more courteous. What indeed shall I say of his practice of chastity and continence? Whenever did he, who from the first flower of his youth until his blessed end happily and completely conquered the incentive to lust,[3] alike in respect of the male and the female sex, hold voluntary niceness of the flesh as a thing of nature? To be sure he was one who never, throughout his whole life, tasted such a thing as the flesh of any beast or winged creature: no one ever saw him drunk: never through change of mind, of halting indecision, not even in the least degree [4] did any kind of drink injure him in any way; never did he put away altogether from himself any drink; but when he was not fasting, he took his meals daily with the rest of the brothers for the sake of charity, and, according to the Gospel, thirsted after righteousness.

XVI. Now these two brothers spoken of above, filled as it would seem with devilish poison, continued to regard him with evil eyes, and that bad priest especially whose bad deed I know, but whose name I have not been able to learn, fearing lest, owing to St. Samson, he himself would be robbed of his hereditary monastery, which he hoped to possess after his uncle, and his brother being like minded, sought [5] an evil motive for his manner of life, but, as they found no cause of accusation against him, they were driven hither and thither like men who are drunk and distraught. Now, as the rest of the rulers were changing places by turn, the brother of the said

[1] *insereret.*
[2] Qu. "To whom much is given, of him much shall be required."
[3] *libidinosam incentivam.*
[4] *minime.*
[5] *perquaerebat.*

priest was made cellarer [1] of this monastery. Moreover, it was a custom in the constitutions of this monastery to bruise herbs from the garden, such as were beneficial for the health, in a vessel and to serve it out in small quantities to the several brothers in their porringers by means of a small siphon for their health's sake, so that when they came in from saying Terce they found the mixing vessel already prepared with garden herbs. Now the cellarer, having accepted the counsel of his wicked brother, mixed the vessel with poison for St. Samson along with its antidote, bruising a kind of lime tree that he might give [2] it him to drink. And that he might learn to what extent it was likely to prove fatal he gave a little of it to a cat [3] in milk. And it came to pass that, when it drank it in milk, it gave a headlong spring and forthwith was dead. Now when the cellarer saw this he was highly pleased, and doubted not that when St. Samson had drunk from this vessel he would straightway take his departure from this world. But, while St. Samson was at prayer, forthwith the Spirit of God revealed to him these things and the evil of late wrought against him. Nevertheless, trusting in the promise of the Lord, mindful of the word of the Gospel where Christ says concerning His faithful who trust in Him, "If they shall drink," He says, "any deadly thing it shall not hurt them," and so on, he entered the refectory exceeding glad, and the more so because he was himself the steward of this monastery. And so, blessing the vessels for the brothers and making the sign of the Cross on his own, without any wavering of mind he drank it dry and never felt even the slightest heartache from it.

XVII. But as they were breakfasting together, on the

[1] "*C'est un cuisinier de semaine chargé de preparer les breuvages.*"—Duine, *Questions d'Hagiographie*, p. 61.
[2] *ut daret.* [3] *pelaci.*

very same day, St. Samson was heard holding a sweet and most pleasant conversation with the cellarer. "Great," he said, "was the sweetness to my throat; and great the strength to my heart, O most loving brother, did that cup afford me, which thou gavest me the first thing to-day. May God heal thee of all sickness whatsoever thou hast." When he heard these things, the brother inwardly felt compunction for the evil he had done, and promised in the presence of Almighty God that he would no longer take evil counsel with his brother against this servant of God, who, to be sure, he had come to know was aware of all things, and bore all his brother's ill-will patiently. Presently he came to reprove his brother and said, "Brother, we have sinned nothing against any man but against Christ and against Samson His beloved; and thou, brother, hast been steeped in thine heart by the poisonous prompting of malice, by the author and inspirer of thy crime, by him of whom [1] it is said by the prophet, 'through envy of the devil came death into the world,' [2] therefore they who hold with him imitate him." But his brother, persisting in the stubbornness of his wicked opinion, gave no assent to the good advice.[3] Meanwhile the swift judgment of God out of heaven was ready to fall.

XVIII. For when the next Sunday arrived, while he received at the hand of St. Samson the communion of the Altar, in that same moment [4] when he conveyed the morsel to his mouth, in that very moment he was seized by an evil spirit so that, turning pale and trembling, giving forth much belching and tearing about, he fell all of a heap to the ground. And when he had indecently stripped off his clothes, he first of all began to bite both his lips with his teeth and to rate the other

[1] *de quo.*
[2] Wisdom ii, 24.
[3] *bono consilio.*
[4] *una hora.*

brothers without any regard for shame and to provoke their hearts to anger, saying, "Why do you stay here, lazy ones, men mighty to do nothing? For I should care nothing for any of you if one among you were not present; if that one had been here, he would have complete control over me." Now when a very wise old man heard these things, he ordered him to be seized and bound by strong brothers and to be led outside. On seeing this his brother, weeping and sobbing and casting himself prostrate in entreaty on the ground, in the presence of all the brothers, declared the whole crime of them both, that it might be done openly,[1] and humbly begged with tears for forgiveness of his offence, promising that he would do penance all his life and evermore serve God and St. Samson.

XIX. When they heard these things the brothers, together with their abbat, marvelled greatly at these things which were happening and, very much fearing lest St. Samson should be offended by this unpleasant business of the poison of late unhappily come to light, and above all, lest he should depart from them, inasmuch as by the latest wrong and its deserved punishment they thought that would happen, they humbly begged the elect of God that he would not refuse to go to the dwelling in which the demoniac brother was vexed by the evil spirit. But St. Samson, weeping and wailing bitterly, thus returned answer in the presence of all the brothers, saying, "Woe is me! wherefore, Lord God Almighty, hast Thou done this to me, that on my account Thou hast allowed my very loving brother to transgress? for I fear to be present in the sight of that man who unjustly hates[2] me, and especially of the devil who inflames him with the torch of hatred. I grieve nevertheless that he has suffered injury at the hands

[1] *in directo*, "*franchement*."—Duine. [2] *odientis*.

of the enemy; but now, if I have favour in the sight of Thy Majesty, through the prayers of the rest of the brothers, with my unworthy mediation, let him receive healing, and Thou shalt give him a contrite heart that his soul may be saved." And, blessing oil and mixing it with water, he began to give it him to taste. When he had tasted these things, he slipped from the hands of those who held him, fell on his back and became as one dead, and the brothers thought not otherwise than that he was going to die; and, after lying between life and death in that spot for the space of almost three hours, not long after Nones he regained consciousness as one alive from the dead, and recovered from the devilish attack his former health, and by the inspiration of God, in the presence of all the brothers, he expressed his penitence for the evil he had done and acknowledged it; and so, by the just judgment of God it came to pass that, while he covetously and unrighteously laid claim to the primacy, throughout his life he never held it.

XX. St. Samson, however, continued to cultivate himself by keener and stricter fasts, very seriously meditating in his heart that that monastery was regarded, through all the land, as turbulent and indeed wasteful. But he, ever desiring to tread that evangelical and narrow path which leads to heaven, gave much thought how he might escape from the society of that brotherhood [1] without wounding the feelings of its master. Now there was, not far from this monastery, a certain island [2] recently inhabited by one, an eminent man and holy priest, Piro by name. In this island I too have been, and it was with him, I say, that St. Samson wished to sojourn,

[1] *caenobii*.

[2] *insula*. The word *insula* is also used of a monastery. Duine takes *insula* here in the sense of monastery.

but he greatly feared, as I have already said, lest he should offend his chief.

XXI. While, therefore, he was considering such-like things with himself and asking God to give him the riches of His will, behold a messenger of the Lord appeared to St. Eltut [1] in a dream, saying, "In the morning when thou risest, ask the will of St. Samson so that, where he wishes (to go), thou mayest forward him, as God is leading him in all things, for know thou also that God is always with him." When that saint awoke, retaining within him by memory the things which had been spoken to him in his sleep, in the morning he rose at daybreak and ordered St. Samson to be summoned to him, and said, "Tell me, beloved of God, the things which, by God's inspiration, are stored in thy will. This night I had an instruction [2] concerning thee that I should forward thy affairs, since God is with thee." When St. Samson heard this he sighed and said he had done no good thing in the sight of God; nevertheless he unfolded very humbly his will to his chief. Moreover, the old man, when he heard these things, returned answer as follows: "Thou must do all things for Christ's sake and willingly endure poverty: nevertheless no one at all in our generation shall be greater than thee." And, checking his tongue and beating his breast, he fulfilled all things according to the will of St. Samson and caused him to be led in peace to the island whither he was bent. And there he was in such wise received by the same above-mentioned priest Piro, an old man already advanced in years, as if he had the appearance of an angel of God sent down from heaven. And leading, with untiring patience, a wonderful, isolated and above all a heavenly life, he ceased not, day or night, from prayer and communion with God. Spending the whole day in working

[1] *Eltutum.* [2] *habui de te preceptum quod opituler.*

with his hands and in prayer, and the whole night, moreover, in the mystical interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, he carried the lamp to his dwelling in order that, bent upon reading, he might either write something or exercise himself in spiritual contemplation;[1] for although, as a man, he had need of rest for the sake of human weakness and reclined against the wall or anything hard for support, he never slept in a bed.

XXII. Now at a certain time[2] in winter, when the father of the same St. Samson, suddenly seized with sickness, was summoned to discharge death's debt, he was urged by his relatives,[3] according to custom, to receive the sacrifice of Communion before his natural death. But he violently asserted that he would never taste of death, never recover health, never partake of the sacrifice,[4] unless he saw his first begotten son Samson, the elect of God; and he said that through him he would receive health equally of body and soul. Struck with wonder at these words, the men who heard him, at once carefully weighing the meaning of these things, straightway ordered horsemen to be sent to request him not to delay to visit his father now lying at death's door and, above all, desirous of recovering at his hands health of body and of mind.

XXIII. These messengers, without stop, arrived at the place where St. Samson lived and received hospitality for the night. As the brothers were going forth in the morning to perform their work, they found them knocking at the door to inquire how they might easily have speech with St. Samson. St. Samson, however, spiritually jesting with them, who did not recognise him, spoke thus: "Tell me the cause of that inquiry, in which

[1] Compare Prologue, Chap. I, and see Duine, *La Vie de S. Samson*, pp. 339–40, n. 2.
[2] *quodam (tempore)*. [3] *vicinis*. [4] *i. e.*, communicate.

behalf you wish to have speech with him, and I will explain." And they answered and said to him, "We wish to see him and to speak with him; for his father and mother [1] and all the neighbours have sent us to talk with him." And he himself with cheerful countenance answering said to them, "Verily I say to you, unless you declare in my presence all your affairs, by reason of which you have come hither, you shall never see the Samson whom you seek." However, while they were lamenting and mistrusting the one the other, St. Piro delighted now spoke as follows: "Behold Samson whom you have sought with so much fatigue of travel; now, what you have to tell, tell me." Then these men fell down before him and announced the greeting of his parents and related truly the reason why they had come.

XXIV. When, however, St. Samson heard (them), in the first place [2] he sighed within himself, thinking it unnecessary to return to the home in which he had been carnally born; and to those who were advising him he said, "Go back to our house, for, unless I am mistaken, I have already left Egypt; to be sure my way is not in that very direction; of a truth God is powerful to heal a sick man." And thereupon, pressing on in front of the brothers, with rapid stride, bent upon doing a work further away, he was taking a step forward, when St. Piro, moved with pity, nay rather by the Holy Spirit, who was ordaining a means for the manifestation of power, gently called him back to him and said unto him, "Wherefore speakest thou thus, elect of God? for thou oughtest not to be slack to do the work of God; surely it behoves thee to have a care for the profit of souls;

[1] The writer evidently had in his mind the incident described by St. Matthew (xii, 46), and this probably accounts for the Scriptural expression employed by St. Samson in his reply to the messengers.

[2] *inprimis.*

for thy reward will be great in the sight of God what time spiritual things are sown by thee in the place where carnal things have grown!" St. Samson, however, looking upon him, after a short silence spake as follows: "Would that thy will might be done; for the sake of God and for the advantage of souls, I am prepared for all things." And they who had been sent begged him that he would make one of the company together with them; and he said unto them, "Do ye go on ahead and we will quickly follow." And being assured that he was about to follow them, when they had received a blessing they left.

XXV. He, however, tarried a day and a night in the monastery after they had gone and, on the morrow, he said, "If I am summoned for the profit of souls and of charity, is there a brother amongst you ready to endure loss with me?" There was a certain deacon, and he himself as yet in the flower of the age of youth, to whom the abbat said, "Thou art stronger than those old men, for the sake of charity, go with thy brother." St. Samson, however, though he foresaw in his spirit that he would not be strong in faith, very joyfully in a word said to him, "Take courage, brother, and play the man."

XXVI. Having thereupon received a blessing and put the horse in the cart, they began to pursue their way. And it came to pass, while they traversed a vast forest, praying as they went, they heard a frightful shrieking cry evidently from some awful creature near them on their right, and on hearing this cry the above-mentioned deacon began to be alarmed, and first of all turning [1] pale, he quickly let go the horse which he had been leading with his hand, and, flinging away the mantle he was wearing, betook himself to rapid flight, while St. Samson shouted after him and said, "Be of good courage,

[1] *pallens.*

brother, I beseech thee, be of good courage lest thou fear, and forget the instruction of the gospel on which thou hast been fed from thy youth." But, as he heeded not and continued to flee, St. Samson, now beholding him from afar with tearful eyes, bravely bearing his wonted spiritual armour and the shield of faith, and investing himself with the ever holy sign of the Cross, saw a sorceress, in truth a very old woman with shaggy hair and that already grey, with her garments of red,[1] holding in her hand a bloody[2] trident, yea, and sweeping the spacious forest in swift career, making a straight line in pursuit of the fleeing man. St. Samson, however, steadfast in faith, as if he had seen the same things before, continued unshaken in mind and, at high speed, keeping the horse in hand, and throwing the fugitive's mantle on the horse, boldly followed after the fugitive and his pursuer; and not far off, as he went on, found the fugitive brother half dead, and, gazing upon him for a moment, beheld a long way distant, the old sorceress running, and perceiving that she was now descending into the valley he shouted after her and said, "Woman why do you flee? behold, I am a man like my companion whom thou hast laid low: if I have been given into thy power, behold, I am here, do not flee; therefore trust me to come to thee." But, as she did not heed these words and still strove to escape, St. Samson shouted after her and said, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ not to stir a step further from that spot where thou now standest until I come and speak to thee."

XXVII. Thereupon, while she stood in that very same spot and trembled and allowed the bloody weapon to fall to the ground, St. Samson came up and very reluc-

[1] See Fawtier's note, pp. 45, 46, n. Duine renders *bribetham* as "rags and tatters" (*en loques en bribes*).

[2] *venalem*, probably from *vena*.

tantly flouted her, saying, "Who art thou, misshapen one, and of what kind art thou?" And she, greatly trembling, said, "I am a sorceress, for indeed the women of my race and sex, as morally perverse, have to this day been transgressors in your sight, and now no one of my race is left in this wood save me only. For I have eight sisters and my mother is still living, and these are not here, but dwell in a wood more remote, and I was made over to this wilderness by my husband, and my husband is dead, and on this account I am unable to withdraw from this wood." However the saint said, "Art thou prepared to restore again to life the brother whom thou hast stabbed, or at any rate to bestir thyself concerning the profit of thy soul?" But in reply, she said, "I neither will nor can be made better, for I seek to do no good thing; from my childhood up to the present I have always been given to wickedness." Thereupon St. Samson properly said, "I implore Almighty God that thou do harm no longer; but so soon as thou art utterly abandoned,[1] in that hour thou must die." And at the conclusion of the prayer that malignant woman, suddenly giving a violent throb in her left side, fell to the ground and was dead.

XXVIII. Then St. Samson returning to his brother, whom he had left half dead on the scene of the disaster, found him lying almost dead, and, when he had carefully examined his breast, he found just a remnant of the breath of life in him: then indeed, following the example of Helizeus, placing his mouth on his mouth and the rest of his limbs on his several limbs and weeping, he humbly besought God that He would deign so far to restore his brother to health that he should not suffer damage of conscience on his account, inasmuch as he was obedient to him in that work of charity. And, God giving strength

[1] *i. e.*, incapable of conversion.

through him, not more than an hour and a half afterwards the brother, half dead, rose up whole as it had been from sleep.

XXIX. In short, the brother was full of gratitude [1] towards him, because, owing to St. Samson, his body was not pierced through by the three-bladed lance of the malignant woman. So, encouraging the brother not to be afraid, they praised God and pursued together the journey which they had begun, and at length on the third day arrived at the place whither they went. And they found Amon, the father of St. Samson, surrounded by his neighbours ill in bed. Amon, however, when he saw them coming into the house, was very glad and said, "Behold the succour of my body and soul which God has deigned to show me in a dream." And forthwith, having turned them all out of doors, his mother only remained with those three. There were Samson himself and his deacon and his father and mother. Without more ado Amon himself, craving their indulgence, in the presence of the three already mentioned, confessed in their midst a principal mortal sin, which he had kept hidden within himself, and vowed that, from that very day until his death, he would serve God with all his heart, his wife especially supporting him in his resolve. He found strength to shave his head that same hour, his wife, as I have said, very strongly urging him and saying to him, "Let not only me and thee, as is meet and right, serve God, but let us link together all our children in the service of God and let all that is ours become wholly God's." Then Amon himself said, "Let it be done according to thy word: therefore all things whatsoever God hath given to me, nay, to thee, up till now, I this day willingly offer all to Him." And so, when his five brothers along with his sister, who made

[1] *gratia.*

the sixth and was quite as yet a young child, were come, on this wise after a short pause he returned answer: "My brothers indeed are good and have been given up to God, but that little girl whom you see and have in your keeping has been given to earthly desires; nevertheless, cherish her, for she is a human being." When the men who had come hither heard this they greatly marvelled and dared not ask him anything concerning this amazing verdict.

XXX. Accordingly, when Amon's head was shaved and his wife received into the order of widowhood, which for a long time she had desired, and when all their substance had been divided and the larger portion given for the use of the poor, and the smaller left for their own use, for they were possessed of abundant means, Amon's brother, on beholding this, together with his wife and their three sons, by a like venture and a like triumph, on one and the same day, were won to Christ, for their mother herself also very gladly received the blessing of widowhood. When all these, therefore, had been established in good works and provision had been made for founding monasteries, St. Samson, together with his father and his uncle, certainly a happy company of four men, began to pursue their journey in peace.

XXXI. But now that they had started on the journey his mother, they say, spoke her thoughts privately to him and said, "The monasteries which, at thy suggestion, are to be founded and the churches which are to be built, not only do I desire, but lovingly embrace, and inasmuch as the time of the intended promise concerning thee draws nigh, we hope, with God's help, our churches are to be consecrated by thee." Then he, as if modestly smiling and assenting "some time" with his hand, dismissed her with his blessing and left in company

with his friends,[1] who were going back by a way other than that by which they had come. And he never ceased to urge those novices by warning and exhortation, and explained sweetly and spiritually the parables of the Old and New Testaments.

XXXII. Now while they pushed forward on their journey Amon, who was in front of them, saw a path, and around the path the ground as if it had been burnt with fire, and a certain track as if a slender tree had been dragged through the burnt grass; and at first, in sooth, he trembled and pointed it out to his brother who was following him, saying, "Behold, brother, the serpent of which we have heard from our parents is in this wood, and it is ahead of us, and, unless I am mistaken, it is not far away from us." And his brother, with very joyful countenance, answered and said, "Fear not, brother, for already all our weapons are safe with God." St. Samson, nevertheless, carefully observing the words of each, began to speak on this wise: "Whence has sprung the discussion among you?" Amon answered, "Thou seest, elect of God, lo! a serpent has preceded us." St. Samson, however, with quiet mind, reassured them that they should not fear, and thus cheerfully spoke: "Put your trust in Him who said,[2] 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say to this mountain: Remove hence, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you.' Therefore be steadfast and wait for me here until I return to you, praying and keeping still in this matter, whatsoever you may hear." Nevertheless, while they were seating themselves and he was proceeding further, his uncle began to follow after him, saying unto him, "Elect of God, it is better that thou shouldest not go alone, allow me therefore to go with thee." And he answered and said to him, "Nay, I go

[1] *comites.* [2] St. Matt. xvii, 20.

not alone, for God is with me; do ye, however, sit here, as I have already said, until I return to you in triumph." He, in fact, swiftly bearing north, saw afar off a fire-spitting serpent which gave forth a rustling sound over the dreary wilderness, and he, in the first place, lifting up his voice in the song of the psalm,[1] repeated, "The Lord is my Light and my salvation," etc.; the serpent both hearing and scenting him, hissing and foaming, twisted its head to the place where its tail should be. Then he, as if he saw merely a little snake, ran up to it. That serpent nevertheless, with a bite, seizing hold of a lump of earth flung it very nearly in his face as he came near and then, when it saw him boldly coming on, and above all the power of God fencing him round, sent forth a vast and awful hissing as if it was being slaughtered with a sword, and afterwards trembling, gathered itself up into a ball as it gnawed its tail with its savage teeth. St. Samson, however, quietly singing to himself the chosen and accustomed psalm [2] which begins, "O give thanks unto the God of gods," boldly made the sign of a circle around the serpent over against himself, planting within it the emblem of the cross which he bore, and said, "Advance now as far as thou art allowed." Then, having called his companions, he said, "Come, brothers, and see the works of the Lord, that faith in faith may be made stronger." Now, when they came, they saw the serpent rather slowly uncoil itself and creep along the ground and round in a circle as it made for the place where the saint's staff was fixed. Again and again it did the same thing, but never was it able to raise aloft its head beyond the boundary. Moreover, in the meanwhile, St. Samson cheered them with sweet evangelical words, strengthening them in faith and saying, "Those who

[1] Ps. xxvii.

[2] Ps. cxxxvi, 2.

believe with a true faith in the Creator ought not to fear the creature," and, uttering many other things of like nature throughout the whole day, he taught them words of edification. Then, observing the day drawing to its close, St. Samson called out to the serpent and said, " We have a long journey, but thou hast no longer to live, therefore I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to die in our presence at this very hour." At once the serpent stood on its tail, and raising its head aloft, and absurdly making a bow of itself, cast forth all its venom and was dead.

XXXIII. Then these men, all of them together, gave thanks to Almighty God and resumed their journey, and, by good fortune, on the third day, having God for their companion, they reached the monastery.[1] And there, the above-mentioned Bishop Dubricius was, to be sure, staying in his own house, the Forty Days of Easter[2] having already begun, and hearing of St. Samson and his companions he was very glad; for it was that bishop's custom to spend almost the whole of the Forty Days of Easter in that retreat;[3] and he courteously and lovingly afforded encouragement both[4] to his father and his uncle.

XXXIV. Now on a certain day the holy Father Dubricius summoned to his presence that deacon who had made the journey with St. Samson and closely questioned him of all which had happened[5] to them on the journey. The holy deacon therefore related all things in order, not omitting that act of cowardice which befell him in the way, of which he gave him a full account.

[1] *insula.*
[2] Quadragesima Paschæ, *i.e.*, the forty days *before* Easter. See Bishop Maclean, *Ancient Church Orders*, p. 132, and Mgr. Duchesne, *Christian Worship* (S.P.C.K.), p. 242, n.
[3] *insula.* [4] for *ei* read *et.* [5] *eventus.*

At the bishop's request he humbly told him everything that had taken place and concealed nothing whatever from him. All these things were a cause of wonderment to the holy St. Dubricius, but he himself knowing that St. Samson was endowed by God, in that hour he bestowed upon him the office of cellarer,[1] saying unto him, " I ordain and above all I desire in the Lord that all the goods which abound in this storehouse by the gift of God, shall be administered and shared by thee." Thereupon, acting in accordance with the old man's bidding, for the sake of obedience, he did all things according to God; for at every moment he seemed to dispense everything in the name of God and of charity.

XXXV. But the devil, who never ceases to molest the human race, inflamed with the torches of envy a certain brother who had been cellarer before him; and he, in disparagement of St. Samson, said that by extravagance Samson had made away with everything they had and, in particular, that he had greedily emptied the jars filled with honey. This wicked charge came to the ears of the bishop, but the bishop, desiring to sally forth secretly to the store-room, sent a boy the hour before he came to St. Samson to say that he might expect him in the store-house. St. Samson, however, by the Spirit's revealing, knew the reason, and forthwith entering the store-room, made the sign of the cross on the jars, and when the bishop came they were all found full and untouched. The bishop, however, wondering at these things, unquestionably believed Samson to be full of the Holy Spirit and adjudged him worthy to be set over the others in a higher office.

XXXVI. Indeed not long afterwards an unexpected thing happened. One dark night the same Piro took a

[1] See Chapter XVI.

solitary stroll into the grounds of the monastery, and what is more serious, so it is said, owing to stupid intoxication, fell headlong into a deep pit. Uttering one piercing cry for help, he was dragged out of the hole by the brothers in a dying condition, and died in the night from his adventure. And it came to pass when the bishop heard of it, he made all the brothers to remain just where they were and spend the night together; and then, having assembled a council, after Mattins, all the men of this monastery, with one accord, chose St. Samson to be abbat. And when he submitted (to be abbat), though not willingly, he trained the brothers gently to the proper rule. And while he held the primacy in this place, which was not more than a year and a half, the brothers regarded him as a hermit rather than as a member of an order of monks. And consequently, amidst feasts of plenty and flowing bowls, he made a point of fasting always from food and drink. Of vigils there is no need to say anything, inasmuch, as I have already stated, he never at any time allowed his body to rest in bed.

XXXVII. Now it came to pass that certain distinguished Irishmen, on their way from Rome, arrived at his dwelling, and, when he had carefully and thoroughly examined them, and had found them to be learned men, with the bishop's sanction, he determined to accompany them to their own country. And there he stayed a short while and by God's help practised many virtues and was revered by the religious of that province as an angel of God. And, by him, God gave sight to many who were blind, and cleansed many who were leprous, and cast out devils, and saved very many from the error of their way; nay, rather, (he did) all things. Nevertheless, let us bring to light one out of many as it is related, which God wrought by him in this country.

XXXVIII. For, as he tarried in the citadel [1] awaiting fair weather for his return to Britain, on a certain day a fair wind having sprung up from the north and the ship being now ready, when the sailor men made all speed to get under weigh and urged him to get on board, forthwith St. Samson replied, "When we sail we have one duty first, to ask God's permission." But the sailor men, roused to displeasure, with one consent determined not to wait for him, and, as they were now hoisting the sail, he himself gently spoke to them as follows: "Go in peace; to-day, God willing, you will return and to-morrow we will sail together." Now, as they were leaving, behold, a certain man, sent from the nearest monastery, prayed him that he would go to the monastery, saying, "The devil has possessed our abbat and I have left him bound while making diligent inquiry concerning thee, whether thou hast already left for thy own country." Now St. Samson, already knowing the matter was from God, set forth on the journey with him and found the demoniac brother bound, and, as he drew near to the threshold of the house in which the demoniac was, the latter saw him and cried with a loud voice and said, "Behold him whom I have ever sought until this day, behold him for whom I have ever waited, behold him against whom I cannot contend." When he had said these things he fell back on the bed as one dead, and while St. Samson prayed, the possessed one, in his bed, by God's help, recovered his reason, and gaining health, equally of body and of mind, through that elect servant of God, gave his monastery with all its substance to Samson and, dedicating himself to the service of God, followed St. Samson to this side of the sea and was always

[1] *Arce.* Many MSS. read *Arce Etri*, which Prof. Loth has identified with Dun Etair, the promontory of Howth at the extremity of Dublin Bay.

his companion. Of his good deeds and good conversation after his fall I know full well, but his name I do not know; nevertheless, from letters already noted, sent to me from across the seas [1] concerning him, I hold it certain that he retired to the monastery of Penetal and therein led a very good and strenuous life. But let us continue what we have begun.

XXXIX. When he had blessed and settled the brothers in the monastery until such time as he should, according to the will of God, send them an abbat, St. Samson, surely enlightened by God, left to join the ship. And it came to pass that, while he was going with his companion to the port, he found in that very hour the ship returning from her voyage under a contrary wind and making for port. Then were they very glad and clave together by turns, and on either side they related the things which had transpired, and stayed there that night, hoping there would be favourable weather in the morning, which afterwards proved to be true. For when night was over, at daybreak, with a fair wind, they proceeded on a prosperous voyage with God as their helmsman, and on the second day they reached that island in which he had previously dwelt. And he found that his father and uncle in that monastery were higher in the service of God and more praiseworthy than almost all and in advance of the rest of those who lived there according to rule, and thereupon he gave repeated thanks to Almighty God.

XL. And when the brothers wished him once more to take up his abode with them he consented not, but sought to find a suitable desert, and when the two brothers above mentioned besought him that they might always live with him—both indeed were good men, but Umbraphel perhaps in some small measure seemed

[1] *i.e.*, from Great Britain.

to excel—Samson nevertheless said to them that it was not allowable for them to be guided by their carnal feelings towards him. "On the contrary," said his uncle, "knowest thou, elect of God, that at thy instance we have forsaken all carnal affections and therefore, because thou art spiritual, we ought to follow thee not after a carnal manner but after a spiritual." Then St. Samson, prudent in spirit, said to them, "Thou, indeed, brother Umbraphel, oughtest to be a pilgrim"; and Umbraphel said, "Thanks be to God." And afterwards St. Samson, far-sighted in spirit, when his uncle had been full speedily ordained to the office of priest, sent him with his blessing as abbat to the monastery, given to him by the before-mentioned brother, which he had left in Ireland. And he caused Amon to come with him, along with the brother of the envious priest, besides the before-mentioned Irish brother, four of them altogether, to a very desolate wilderness, and, having discovered a very delightful castle near the river Severn, and in it a spring of very sweet water, he set about making a dwelling for his brothers, while he prayed that the Lord would be pleased to show him some underground cave, and the Lord graciously fulfilled that most faithful prayer.

XLI. For, on a certain day, as he wandered through the forest he found a very spacious and very lonely cave, and its mouth being situated towards the east, he embraced it affectionately as though it had been given by God for a dwelling. And after seven days' fast from food and drink he found himself indeed with one dry loaf of bread, but he had no water at all wherewith to quench his thirst. But it came to pass at length, on the seventh day, about the third hour, while, hungry and thirsty, he continued earnestly in prayer and his face touched the ground bent as for a favour, he perceived

that the earth was wet and, driving (into it) the spike of his staff,[1] a spring of sweet water rose up; and thither, afterwards, for a whole month all bread was brought to him by his brothers; and up to the time when I was in Britain the place, in which the three beforementioned brothers were, was always reverenced with great devotion, and also an oratory constructed[2] therein, where St. Samson was wont to come every Sunday to sing mass and for Christ's communion.

XLII. Then a synod having been summoned, when the older men inquired where St. Samson lay hid, a certain man came forth and said that he would be found at that cave wherein St. Samson was leading a heavenly life, and also at that castle whereunto St. Samson was wont to come to sing Mass with these three brothers, who were observing in it the rule of penitence[3] to God. Thereupon they all, with one consent, addressed a letter of summons,[4] (and this letter I have heard read,) that he must not work for himself alone, forasmuch as they most certainly already knew that he would be profitable to many, and they eagerly and lovingly urged him to come to the synod. Consequently, when he had carefully read that letter, he came, though not with willing steps,[5] to the synod with them, having only one of the three for a companion. But when the elders saw him with a countenance exceeding joyful, as if they beheld an angel of God, they received St. Samson with reverent greeting and appointed him abbat against his will in the monastery which, it is said, had been founded by St. German. And they had in that same place an accustomed day, when they came together for ordaining bishops, that is, the day of the blessed Apostle Peter's Chair (22 February).

[1] *baculi.* [2] *compositum.* [3] *placabilem, pleasing.*
[4] *indiculum.* [5] *cursu.*

XLIII. And it came to pass that, as that yearly festival drew near and the bishops looked forward to the usual gathering, St. Samson saw a wonderful vision. On a certain night he beheld himself clothed in white apparel surrounded by closest crowds of delightful beings, and three distinguished bishops, wearing golden crowns [1] on their heads, clothed with vestments of pure silk and most beautiful, stand in front of him and urge him to enter the church together with them, for the purpose of prayer. Then, when he had entered the church, as he himself subsequently related, he earnestly and humbly asked the names of these three and received this reply from them : they were Peter, and James the Lord's brother, and John the Evangelist ; the reason of their coming indeed was that they were sent [2] by the Lord Jesus Christ to confirm him as pre-eminently the chosen priest of the Lord. Then, when he was fully ordained [3] bishop by them according to the manner, and had received their blessings, they departed, and he himself, awaking from sleep, perceived by the Spirit that he was already made a high priest. But when those bishops came, they set apart, against the appointed and accustomed day, two among them to be ordained, and they wished to ordain a third, in accordance with a custom handed down of old time, but were ignorant as yet who he might be. And on the following night an angel of God appeared to the holy Father Dubricius in a dream, as he himself afterwards was wont to relate, and assured him that St. Samson was to be a high priest and told him that he was pleasing to God. St. Dubricius, to be sure, for joy of

[1] See Warren, *Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, pp. 119–120. The Serbian bishop wears a mitre in the form of a crown.

[2] *missos.*

[3] *perfunctus.* Duine thinks *perfunctus* may be an erroneous reading for *perunctus*, "anointed."—*Questions d'Hagiographie*, p. 61.

this angelic conference, caused all the best advisers of the congregation [1] to be awakened and to come together into one place, joyfully crying aloud to them what he had seen and heard, and what he had hitherto [2] kept back in his mind; and that they must ordain him priest, since he knew full well the mighty works which the Lord had already wrought by him.

XLIV. Then all the members of the Council,[3] without any division, readily supported the proposal that he should be made a bishop. When St. Samson knew this he related fully to Father Dubricius the dream as he himself saw it; and when the wise men in their turn had consulted together, though they believed beyond doubt that by this miracle he was already made a true bishop, they nevertheless determined that, for the confirmation of faith, he must be placed in the episcopal chair and be confirmed with the two others. And so, as he was sitting in the seat of honour, all who stood by saw a dove, sent from heaven, pay the wonted tribute and stand over him all the time unmoved until he was quite through the ceremony [4] and was ordained bishop; not as the manner of birds is, disturbed from its place by the commotion of the bystanders and by the ministers as they ran to and fro through the church. Moreover, as he was singing Mass on the same day in the presence of them all, it was apparent to Father Dubricius and to two distinguished monks that there proceeded from his mouth and nostrils as it had been fire. And, what is greater than all these things, from that day when he became a presbyter until his happy death, when he sang Mass, the angels [5] of God ever became holy ministers of

[1] Chapter of monks.
[2] *jam*, or what he already kept.
[3] *consiliari*.
[4] *perfunctus perfecte*.
[5] The ministration of angels at the Eucharist is referred to in *Apost. Const.* (Syria, *circa* 375) and in the *Test. of Our Lord*

the altar and of sacrifice along with him, and often broke the oblation with their hands though he alone saw it.[1]

XLV. Thereupon wonderful things are followed by things more wonderful and earth's cries are silenced where Heaven speaks. For on a certain night when he was preparing to sing the Paschal Mass and, following a custom of his, after partaking only of the blessed bread,[2] had determined to stand wakeful till dawn at the altar by himself alone, nay, rather, with God also with him, as he was praying on that very spot in ecstasy, he lost consciousness altogether, and as he stood there, he saw a mighty man shining with great splendour come and stand by him, and at first, as I have heard he afterwards related to his father,[3] he himself was terrified by the

(Asia Minor, *ante* 375). See Maclean, *Church Orders* (pp. 40, 149, 163–4). In the Mozarabic Missal the prayer is as follows: "Adesto, adesto, Jesu, bone pontifex, in medio nostri, sicut fuisti in medio discipulorum tuorum; sanctifica hanc oblitionem ut *sanctificata sumamus per manus sancti angeli tui*, sancte domine ac redemptor æterne." Then follow the words of institution. Duchesne considers that the above Adesto cannot be primitive, inasmuch as in the Merovingian Missals of the seventh and eighth centuries the Vere Sanctus always precedes *immediately* the words of institution. The Roman Missal runs, "supplices te rogamus, omnipotens Deus: *Jube hæc preferri per manus sancti angeli tui in sublime altare tuum*," etc. (Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, pp. 181, 216). The *supplices te rogamus* does duty for the *epiclesis* of the Greek Church. It will be noticed that in the Mozarabic rite the angel is to bring the *sanctificata* down to us and in the Roman to carry the *sanctificata* up to God's altar in heaven. The former is the Greek and the latter the Roman conception of angelic ministration. See Duchesne, p. 182.

[1] For joint consecration see Warren, pp. 128–9. In the Roman rite the fraction of the Oblata was performed (when the Pope was the celebrant) by the deacons. See Duchesne, pp. 185–6.

[2] *eulogium* probably = *eulogiæ*, unconsecrated bread corresponding to the *pain bénit* given in French churches at the present day. Duchesne distinguishes between this and the agape. See *Christian Worship*, p. 49, n. Also see Maclean, *Church Orders*, p. 47. Also see Warren, p. 139.

[3] *patri*.

immensity of this apparition; and he heard a word of comfort for him not to fear and which said to him: "Be of good cheer, saint of God, and play the man, for God holds thee dear and true; now therefore listen without fear to my words. For indeed I have been sent to thee by my Lord; of a truth thou oughtest to tarry no longer in this country, for thou art ordained to be a pilgrim, and beyond the sea thou wilt be very great in the Church and worthy of the highest priestly dignity." When he had related these and many like things and had bidden him farewell, on the arrival of the brothers for the morning chapter, the angel gently withdrew and left; and he, accepting the omen with all the eagerness of faith and keeping it carefully in his mind, when he had finished the office of the Paschal Celebration, forthwith, amid the regrets and tears of the whole congregation, directed his course towards this side of the Severn Sea. On his way, moreover, he goes to see his mother and his aunt and consecrates the churches which they have already built; and he excommunicates his sister, having found that she has now left her mother, and, further, close gathered in adulterous embraces, has joined with others in defying her and that she herself still persists in her evil courses; moreover, he thankfully rejoices with their mothers over his brothers and cousins who are leading a noble and a catholic life; he sets afoot much good work in those places for the building of them up in spiritual virtues; he sets free from disease many among them who are sick whether in body or in mind, and, freely bestowing the power of his benediction upon them all, with a favourable wind, after a happy passage, arrives, attended by the before-mentioned three and many others, at a monastery which is called Docco.

XLVI. Now when the brothers who were in this place hear of his arrival, and especially of his request

that some wise man among them should come forth, straightway they direct the wisest of them, Juniavus by name—who himself was also named amongst them, in the British language, Light—to confer with him. For he also was divinely inspired and knew many things concerning the future. Moreover, when he had come to the place where Samson was, he addressed him with respectful greeting; and giving thanks to Almighty God for his arrival and sitting down beside him as an equal, he humbly inquired of him where he was going. But when St. Samson told him the cause of his journey and asked whether he might stay with them for a little time, St. Juniavus, prudent in spirit, thus gently gave reply, saying, "O most loving father, by a servant of God it is a thing to be wished that he should walk in the way by which thou goest, for in the Gospel God praises him who is content to be a pilgrim for His sake, nevertheless the thing which thou requirest, that thou wouldest be grateful to stay with us, is not convenient lest thou, who art better than we, shouldest be condemned by us, for example, who are less worthy, and, what is more proper, lest we should be denounced of thee by reason of the merits which we lack. For I wish you to know this, that we come short of our former practice; in fact, it behoves thee to pursue thy way in peace or else, once at least, before thou shalt have crossed the Channel and reached Europe, to give some outward sign, in order that by thee, to this extent, before thou art absent in the body, the power of the Lord may be made manifest in the country before thee."

XLVII. Now when St. Samson heard these things he was astonished at his doctrine and perceived that the Holy Spirit spoke through him, and so, sending away his ship at that same place, he arranged for a cart to convey his holy vessels and books, and harnessed two horses to

his chariot which he had brought with him from Ireland, and with the Lord for his companion he arranged his journey so as to completely traverse the country. A veteran traveller, he eagerly sought what they call the Southern Sea, and which [1] leads to Europe; and, with a band of brothers in front of him, likewise others following behind and he himself alone, as was meet, in their midst, he never ceased to offer supplication to God by day or by night.

XLVIII. Now it came to pass, on a certain day, as he was on a journey through a certain district which they call Tricurius,[2] he heard, on his left hand to be exact, men worshipping a certain idol [3] after the custom of the Bacchantes, by means of a play in honour of an image. Thereupon he beckoned to his brothers that they should stand still and be silent while he himself, quietly descending from his chariot to the ground and standing upon his feet and observing those who worshipped the idol, saw in front of them, resting on the summit of a certain hill, an abominable image. On this hill I myself have been and have adored and with my hand have traced the sign of the cross which St. Samson with his own hand carved by means of an iron instrument on a standing stone. When St. Samson saw it (the image), selecting two only of the brothers to be with him, he hastened quickly towards them, their chief, Guedianus, standing at their head, and gently admonished them that they ought not to forsake the one God who created all things and worship an idol. And when they pleaded as excuse that it was not wrong to celebrate the mysteries of their progenitors in a play, some being furious, some mocking, but some of saner mind strongly urging him to go away, the power of God was made clearly manifest.

[1] *quodque.* [2] *i.e.*, the Hundred of Trigg in Cornwall.
[3] *phanum*, "idol."—Duine.

For a certain boy, driving horses at full speed, fell from a swift horse to the ground, and twisting his head as he fell headlong, remained just as he was flung, little else than a lifeless corpse.

XLIX. Then St. Samson, speaking to the tribesmen as they wept around the body, said, "You see that your image is not able to give aid to the dead man. But if you will promise that you will utterly destroy this idol and no longer adore it, I, with God's assistance, will bring the dead man to life." And they consenting, he commanded them to withdraw a little further off, and, after praying earnestly over the lifeless man for two hours, he delivered him, who had been dead, alive and sound before them all. Seeing this, they all with one accord, along with the afore-mentioned chief, prostrated themselves at St. Samson's feet and utterly destroyed the idol.

L. Then the far-sighted chief made them all come and ratify their allegiance by baptism at the hands of St. Samson, and, as he came with them, he praised God and said, "Behold, an angel of God sent from heaven has come to rescue us from our error; but even now we have great anxiety of mind." St. Samson said, "What is that?" The chief replied, "We have a certain fair land held in occupation by a poisonous and very vicious serpent; in fact, this serpent lives in a cave impossible of approach, and it is destroying nearly two villages and allows [1] no man to dwell there." When he heard this, St. Samson boldly said, "In the name of the Lord let us go, nothing doubting; if indeed thou believest, thou shalt see with thine eyes in this serpent the wonderful works of God." But in fact without hesitation and with one accord they went away with St. Samson; moreover, that young man who had been lately restored to life,

[1] *licet.*

having promised to become a clerk, followed him. And so, with St. Samson, the boy recently chosen preceded the army and furnished it with a leader all the way; and when the day broke, on the second day they saw with their eyes that awful cave where the serpent was. Then the boy inquired, "Look! Elect of God, do you see the cave across the river where the serpent is?" But he, trusting in the Lord and commanding the army and his monks likewise to stay where they were, alone—nay, God was with him—crossed the river to the other side, his boy following him, and together they came to the entrance of the awful cave. St. Samson, moreover, as he looked upon the boy who followed him with a gentle smile, spoke as follows: "Boy, be of good cheer and play the man," and the boy said, "Whom shall I fear, excellency? God is with thee." And then, ordering him to stand a little way off, he boldly entered the cave. The serpent, however, as soon as it saw him, trembled exceedingly and was disposed to turn itself and bite its tail with passion; but he, quickly seizing the linen girdle that was around him, without more ado, slipped it on its neck, and dragging the beast near to him, flung it from a certain height and charged it in the name of Jesus Christ not to live any longer. Now, when the boy saw these things, he rushed in wild haste to the army and to the chief, and related to them all the things in order which he had seen. But they had no sooner heard than they all, without delay, quietly came to him and wished him to receive apostolic honour. He, however, was not willing to accept anything great from them, but, in honour of the power which had been displayed, he commanded his own men to found a monastery near the cave; yet he himself indeed, in the meanwhile, led a heavenly life in the cave, ever giving himself to fasting and to prayer.

LI. But I think silence ought not to be preserved concerning that miracle which in this same cave God showed on his account. For on a certain day when, by reason of thirst, after excessive faintness arising from fasting and thirst, he prayed to the Lord that He would deign to give him some of the water of comfort, forthwith the Lord of heaven, at his prayer, satisfied his desire and he became aware of a brisk shower of water, as from a cloud, falling from the stony lintel of the cave and, near the cave, flowing over a certain rock at great speed. Then in truth, when he saw this, he greatly rejoiced because of it, and perceived thereby that, through the Spirit, God [1] had given help in answer to his prayer. And up to this day that stream has never ceased to flow either by day or by night.

LII. Then, when he had received his cousin—him already mentioned at the beginning of this work—and admitted him to the office of the diaconate, after giving instructions to his father for the government of that monastery by them built and completed, and having finished the works which God wrought by him in those parts, with God for his guide, he directed his course towards this side of the sea, in accordance with his promise. And with very many monks and above all with that deacon of whom we have sufficiently spoken already, as companions, after a favourable passage they reached their desired port in Europe. But, as they were landing from the ship, they saw a hut of no great size standing not far from the harbour, and, as St. Samson drew near to it, he saw on the threshold of the little dwelling an individual [2] making lamentation and ever gazing towards the sea. In fact St. Samson, directing his steps towards him, inquired of him the reason of this; the individual for his part said to him, "It is

[1] *Deum.* [2] Or "One, Privatus."

now three days and as many nights since I waited in this harbour the coming of the helper from beyond the sea whom God promised me." St. Samson said unto him, "What is thy trouble?" He said, "I have in this house a leprous wife, moreover, a demoniac daughter, and I had the promise of their cure in this harbour." St. Samson, to be sure, immediately entered within the house, and pouring forth prayer over both of the sick women, with God's help delivered them safe and sound before them all. And, going forth from thence, having God for his guide, he discovered a most suitable spot in these parts and founded a famous monastery which to this day, by an appropriate use of language, is called Dol. From that place he planted the seed of many works of a wonderful character and founded many monasteries throughout almost the entire province, which, if all of them were described, one by one, we should be led to exceed the task we undertook.

LIII. Nevertheless I do not think one, the greatest and the most wonderful work of all, ought to be passed over [1] in silence, which, in this (country of) Europe, God wrought by his hands. For when he had learnt that all the districts were in direst distress, and had made most diligent inquiry of them as to the cause of it, they tell him that an unjust and unprincipled stranger has come to be judge over the land and that their ruler, Jonas by name, who holds their land by hereditary custom, has been handed over to death as the result of wicked bribes wickedly given into the hands of the king and of the queen, his greatest bane; and, moreover, that his son Judual has been delivered to captivity and to death, but up to the present they asserted that he was alive. When, indeed, St. Samson heard these things, by the providence of God, he was moved with compassion

[1] *prætereundum.*

and promptly set forth to go to King Hiltbert on Judual's account, having Christ always and in all things for his companion.

LIV. And it came to pass when he had entered within the palace, God, as we may suppose, exercising power on his behalf, he found a certain great chief harassed by suffering at the hands of a demon; and, when he was aware of this, St. Samson came to him and, having taken oil, blessed it and fully anointed him on the head, face and breast while many watched him; and, with God's help, he who had been sick was made perfectly whole. And immediately news was carried to the king about him and the miracle which God had wrought by him.

LV. When he wished to talk with the king and had discussed the matter of the same Judual, that he might be sent away to him, an insolent refusal was brought. In effect, they said that he would never see [1] him alive. St. Samson, however, very gently and yet doggedly continued to urge the plea he had begun; they more disgracefully refused. Now when St. Samson saw that his words produced no effect upon them, being angry, he was disposed to depart from them; and threatening to decimate them through their progeny if they refused to give him the man he sought, as he was departing full of anger, that chief from whom the demon had been expelled, with many others, urged upon the king that a saint of God ought not to be insulted. Then the king, with the full consent of his companions, wished to appease Samson. The wicked queen, continuing still in her wickedness and shamelessly bawling out to the saint in vile language, which is not fit to be repeated, by means of a trick of wicked contrivance, requested him to partake of food with the king before he was reconciled to him. Then St. Samson, not with a ready will but for

[1] *videre.*

convention's sake, consented to partake of food with them; but the wicked queen, at the devil's bidding, caused them to mix poison in the glass for him and ordered it to be carried by her servant to St. Samson as he sat [1] near the king. And so, as the king received his own cup and St. Samson made the sign of the Cross upon it, the servant brought before him the glass with the poison intended for him; then he, surely inspired by God, having placed the sign of the Cross on the hand of him who held it, split the glass wherein was the evil thing into four parts and, spilling the wine over the cup-bearer's hand, crashing cut it to the bone, while many looked on. St. Samson, however, as if in a very friendly [2] manner, said, "It is not meet that a man should drink this cup." And when he had made the accustomed sign on the wounded man's hand he was made whole in the presence of them all.

LVI. Thereupon the king, being confounded, and all of them indignant, the queen, always wicked, became hardened in her wickedness. And it came to pass, that, the king giving his consent, St. Samson purposed to go to the place where Judual was. Forthwith that queen ordered an unbroken and furious horse to be brought from the drove to carry him. When he saw him, St. Samson placed the sign of the Cross on the unruly steed, and having put the saddle on him he himself mounted the horse. And so gentle and timid was the horse, that he hardly dared move his foot or to go even very slowly, Christ bringing him into subjection to His elect.

LVII. And the queen, herself ever hardening, by wicked contrivance seeking to overcome and destroy Samson the saint of God, ordered a fierce and angry lion to be provoked [3] by its keepers and to be brought loose

[1] *sedenti.* [2] *amite* for *amice.* [3] *provocari.*

and furious to the port over against him, as though they were ignorant of what was going on, as St. Samson went on his way in front of his companions with his accustomed weapons. Now when the lion, fierce and furious, saw him making straight for it with fearless steps, losing courage, and God fighting against it for His elect, just as if it had received a blow in the eyes, it betook itself to rapid flight. Then that holy man, very greatly confused and agitated, with an invocation of the name of Christ, discharging after the beast his accustomed missiles as if from a spiritual catapult, spoke thus: "I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ, who has given power to us to tread underfoot you and things like you, that thy terrible power from this day forward may never more rise up against the human race, but that, expiring swiftly in the presence of all these people, they may know and understand that as a servant of Christ I have been sent from this [1] place into that province." When he had finished speaking,[2] and while many looked on, the lion threw himself headlong and that hour was dead. Then all these men together with that queen, beholding these things, smitten with fear, fell at St. Samson's feet and promised all things according to the pleasure of his will. And, lest he should suffer any damage, they became surety to him for the aforementioned Judual.

LVIII. Then the king was desirous of pleasing St. Samson in all things, and when he had received him with apostolical honour and promised good concerning the above-mentioned Judual, he said humbly, "Elect of God, we have very great anxiety of mind, for there is a vile serpent doing great destruction and making desolate our country; we have heard concerning thee that thou hast been victorious in a case like this, and so, if no harm

[1] for *huc* read *hinc*. [2] for *ratione* read *oratione*.

might happen to thee, we should like thee to drive it away from us." Thereupon St. Samson unhesitatingly said, " Ascertain for me the way (to it) and, trusting in God, I will come, in the strength of God, and cast it forth." Then a certain man, experienced and bold, stepped forth to accompany him. Accordingly, leaving his companions in the palace with the above-mentioned Judual, and choosing only two of his own to be with him, he took his journey forthwith, having Christ for his companion. Now it came to pass that in due time they came to that horrible cave wherein the serpent dwelt. When St. Samson knew this he said to his friends, " Be steadfast and wait here for me until I come back to you." Now while they stayed there, he himself, seeing that he had God for his companion, boldly went forth to the mouth of the horrible cave, and after fasting, watching and praying there, at length called to the serpent in the name of Jesus Christ to come to him. And as it came [1] full of fear, St. Samson seized hold of his mantle and bound it round the serpent's neck, and dragging it near to him, while he sang the already mentioned accustomed psalm, he ordered it to go to the other side of a certain river which is called Sigona (Seine), and commanded it to remain there under a certain stone.

LIX. So when he had returned with his companions and was come back to the palace, his companions related to the king and all his friends everything they had seen concerning the serpent. Then fear and very great wonder fell on all, insomuch that no one indeed durst offend him any more, even in the smallest matter. Accordingly, when St. Samson wished to go back to Brittany with Judual, the king willingly consented, and when, with the king's assistance, he had arranged for the erection of a splendid monastery in the place [2] whence he

[1] *veniente.* [2] *loco.*

had expelled the serpent, and with the king's encouragement had sent forth brothers to be there and to carry on the work, with a favourable wind he set out for Lesia [1] and Angia, islands of the sea; and, those men being well known to St. Samson, at his request came with one accord with Judual to Brittany. And, on a certain day as he was praying and fasting, by his holy intercession God gave victory to Judual, so that, with one blow, he overthrew Commorus the unjust oppressor and himself reigned over all Domnonia [2] with his offspring. So that, finally, that same St. Samson was received with very great reverence by the before-mentioned King Hiltbert, and all things, whatsoever he wished, he gave him not only abundantly, but also willingly and at once, freely bestowing both estates and privileges.

LX. On [3] the other hand, on a certain occasion when he was in his house in Romania, he heard a shocking story concerning a serpent which was doing not less mischief than the former ones. Thereupon, smitten in conscience, he set out for it and, as formerly, dragged it forth and cast it into the sea, charging it in the name of Jesus Christ to die lest it should do further harm. But how many mighty works God did by him on this side and beyond the sea, and how much envy and evil-speaking he endured, especially at the hands of perverse priests, they are past reckoning, and there is no need to search them out here one by one.

LXI. And so, having completed all the mighty works which God wrought by him both in Brittany and Romania, and having built catholic churches and fenced them according to the pattern of his own manner of life, being perfect in life and in age, and having in the Apostle's words finished his course, a course good and

[1] See Part II, 13, n. [2] In Brittany.
[3] This chapter is possibly an interpolation.

beyond measure, with all good qualities fully and completely adorned, happy in his death, he left his wasted body to be embalmed and buried in the sacred mound in the monastery at Dol, in hope of the resurrection to eternal life, whilst his happy soul went full of bliss to Christ; and the brothers at the hour of his departure heard the hymns of angelic (choirs). And we have the token of his felicity with us, it is evident, in these signs which, by him, God shows forth day by day. Amen.

Here it endeth in the Name of our Lord. Up to this point we have corrected it just as we wished to do.

PART II

I. Our Lord Jesus Christ liveth for ever. Almost at the close of my life, the life of an ignorant and very dull man, yet also near the end of a work moderately [1] ornate for his sake of whom I write, that most holy St. Samson; while the shallow and tiny bark of my inexperience traverses as it were the boundless and abysmal expanse of some great sea, with stricken heart indeed, but with my kind God to guide with heavenly light for the sailing and for (the directing) of my simple and uninformed tongue, we give thanks to Almighty God because He has at length been pleased to hand down so important a work, concerning so holy and renowned a man, by me a sinner, one in all respects unworthy, with a catholic and truthful pen. Moreover, for myself, who hope for further edification and seek it with steadfast faith, rather I should say, for all who hear and read, I beg, O most blessed Father [2] Tigernomalus, the assistance of thy holy intercessions at the throne of God, because Almighty God is wont to refresh him who dutifully returns to Him with his heart. Besides, Father, believe me, as I have already said, I have not chosen to hand down by pen from memory all the things stored in my mind concerning St. Samson, but, out of many, I have thought it sufficient to bring

[1] *Mogillatim*, possibly a corrupt reading for *moderatim*. *Du Cange* refers it to μογιλὰλος, stammering.
[2] See Prologue, Chap. III, note.

together a few, in order that from that which we hold among us for certain may result a fruitful edifice in the minds of hearers and readers alike. For what need have we, who know many things more and have heard as I consider sufficient, to thrust forward anything further concerning his fastings and abstinences? We beg [1] thee, whoever thou art, who readest this little book, to hold me blameless for my lack of skill.

II. Well then, dearest brothers, we have made plain, so far as we have been able and that meagrely, I think, the declared experience of that so great and distinguished a man, St. Samson, from the beginning of that elect one to his happy end, at thy will, O most blessed Father Tigernomalus, having unquestionable certainty thereof by the most sure evidence granted by God to us, however unworthy we may be. But now also that grand and holy and yearly celebration, by which in his [2] deserved and splendid honour it is wont to be kept, as year succeeds year, is at hand, and puts it into our mind to help by a little work of this nature and, in the rejoicing of the festival itself, to enlarge our hearts to the greater profit of our souls. For, on this wise, shall we have profit from it. From whatsoever source it shall have been made manifest, it is clear that we are not by any means to hide the incomparable virtues of so great a man, but, with the pen, to bring forward the help or example and pattern of the well-doing of the churches of Christ and, following apostolic precedent, the memory of this the best of men, for example, to be a model profitable to many who are earnestly striving to reach virtue's highest point. And, therefore, with the return of this festival, reason demands that we, combining something of admiration with apostolic and spiritual

[1] *poscimus.* [2] *in cujus = qua in illius.*

joy, should unfold something worthy of this our splendid yearly day of festivity, as far as the strength of our ability may be equal to the task, and, along with the virtues of the same saint, something—as much as one has been able and not as much as suffices—be it said. Nevertheless, it remains for us to consider somewhat concerning the works of daily and present occurrence of the same man, as they not inadequately correspond with those of the past, which have been already described, and above all, to consider those which, on the annual celebration of this day, the Lord fails not to perform for those who look on, by the same saint; not by enumerating those works, for that surely is impossible, but by honouring and presenting them, so that by this light it may appear clearer to all, who keep this anniversary after a catholic manner, in what way this faithful saint has been received into the heavens, by whom we perceive and know the Lord [1] accomplishes all things among us on earth.

III. For who, indeed, on this day is able to reckon up adequately how many feeble-minded, how many blind, how many cripples, how many epileptics, how many possessed, how many subject to various kinds of sickness, have in our times been set free from their infirmities at the intercession of our chief priest [2] Samson, now with God, whose commemoration is an occasion of thanksgiving to-day? Of a truth without number are the beds and couches cast away by the sick. And how many hindered by infirmities of body and of mind have been made whole by God's help on this same day by the same saint! And what more is there to recall concerning our saint unless it be to bring to mind, with huge delight, as it seems to me, the apostolic virtue of

[1] *Dominum.* [2] *antistite.*

old time, by God's goodness, at length shining forth again with a certain correspondent manifestation to us? When in the Acts of the Apostles the apostles were come together into one place, that is, to Solomon's Porch, which we can understand figuratively as in truth a token of peace and unity; when crowds without number came, even by means of the shadow of the same apostles they were made whole, every one of them, of all the diseases which they had. And truly up to this day, throughout the whole world, wherever Christians are scattered, through the yearly festivals which they keep in honour of individuals, the Lord never ceases to perform mighty works. In like manner also, on this splendid and festal day, at God's inspiration, by this man of whom we began to write, by St. Samson, mighty works of God, truly not inferior by comparison, have been made manifest on the most sure evidence. Accordingly, we recognise him to be endowed on such wise with his everlasting quality and unhampered freedom, and with the ineffable blessedness, so to speak, of the heavenly kingdom that, on this account, year by year, our heart gladdens again and again to spiritual joy. And hence it is that we seem to perceive, as God enlightens us, the next life with a kind of clear and keen insight, and that not so much by symbols as by the actual, true, visible things which, as I may say, with much certainty, we see him performing by God's help in our midst. For indeed, as I have said, we firmly believe him to be engaged there in another, better and unending life among the saints of God,[1] whom we perceive shining forth among us who are alive, strong and mighty in the work of God.

IV. And on this account, dearest brothers, by the

[1] *inter sanctos Dei.*

favour of God, let us earnestly strive, as the result of an intense and supreme effort, with unshaken faith and hope, not as with a doubtful but with a most accurate pattern (before us) by way of support, to fashion our uncertain life after the example of that renowned and most blessed man St. Samson, in essential matters, that is, as far as faith is concerned, and to adjust diligently our hearing, with ample and full perception, to the reading of this little work, though it is short, that the things which have served him for a garland may serve us for salvation. For it is not meet that anyone, who is disposed to reverence St. Samson for his works and again in the yearly celebrations, should defile his life with foul pollution through wandering and vain or silly and above all vicious employments,[1] because it is very disgraceful, and, moreover, hateful to Almighty God, that he, who reverences this solemn and holy day, by the service of the tongue and by the accustomed solemnities, should appear with polluted mind in the presence of Almighty God, and that crimes and sins should have dominion over him. For thus, indeed, a certain wise man [2] speaks when he discusses the Day of Judgment, for he says, " To what particular apostles, to what particular saints, shall we be prepared to flee for refuge, the examples no less than the words of whom we have despised? " Moreover, that man certainly runs counter [3] to the example of this saint who, for instance, profanes this venerable usage by lip service merely and destroys it by a wicked and sinful life. For what does

[1] *operationes.*

[2] The wise man is St. Gregory the Great (540–604), the reformer of Church Music, who became Pope in 591 and sent St. Augustine to England in 597. The passage here referred to is from *Hom. in Evangel.*, II, xxxii, 8.

[3] *displicit.*

it profit if anyone, about to approach the man of a certain prince in respect of any crime,[1] to beg him to be his intercessor, shall himself, by his wicked attacks, provoke the same intercessor to anger? Would not his anger be kindled worse against him if, through any mockery, his case should be set forward, as it were unwillingly, by intercession; and, what is more serious, would not the mind of the ruler wax hot against him and be moved to displeasure rather than to favour if he should crave indulgence for his fault by infamy? For thus we read in the Old Testament, when the Lord would unfold His complaint against a rebellious people, both rejecting (that people) as if by reason of its own pleading, and appropriately[2] denouncing its vile supplications, and meanwhile, having brought forth the best men by name and introduced them into their midst, He forbids them the obligation of praying for the same people, for He says, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind is not toward this people";[3] whence also this (saying) has received the warrant of the Gospel, in that having Christ for its Author, it exclaims, "Why is it that ye call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"[4]

V. Therefore, my brothers, to honour the festivals of the saints is nothing else than to adjust lovingly our mind to their good qualities, of which we are fully

[1] The sense of this passage would be improved if we might read *dilectum* for *delictum*. It would then read, "approach some favourite of a prince." Also at the close of the next sentence we should have "his favourite's indulgence."

[2] *competenter*.

[3] Jeremiah x, 2.

[4] St. Luke vi, 46. As M. Duine has pointed out, the reading in the *Vita Samsonis* differs from that of the Vulgate. The former gives *Quid est quod dicitis mihi Domine*, etc.; the latter, *Quid autem vocatis me Domine*, etc.

cognisant; (so that) by imitating them we may be able to follow the same men, under God's guidance, by the straightest course [1] to that [2] unspeakable and heavenly kingdom to which they have happily attained, not rivalling them in great deeds,[3] but sharing their difficult tasks, which by abstinence, prolonged and incredible,[4] so to speak, to the untried,[5] with whom all things are not thought possible to him that believeth, they engaged in until the happy close of this life. Besides, as a Scripture [6] saith, "It profits nothing to take part in the feasts of men if it chance that one is absent from the feasts of Angels." [7] As I have said, what does it profit if we are seen to rejoice with them who rejoice in this world and, on account of lawless and vile works, by which God is offended, we shall have been severed, as exiles, from the fellowship of the saints, that is, from the heavenly kingdom which is everlastingly with God? Behold, we have kept festivals on earth; we must take care, above all, that we are found worthy to take part, undefiled and without spot, in the heavenly and eternal festivals with the companies of Angels. And therefore let us hasten to cut off, at the roots, the things which hinder us and which are contrary to these works whereby God is conciliated,[8] and let us keenly direct our attention, not to the concerns in which we have been, but to those in which we are about to be engaged, because Almighty God has promised to set him free who turns to Him dutifully with all his heart, and, in making the

[1] *rectissima linea.* [2] *ad illud.* [3] *virtutibus.*
[4] *incredibilem.* [5] *inexpertis.*
[6] The Scripture is that of St. Gregory and is taken from *Hom. in Evangel.*, II, xxvi, 10.
[7] For the reading of the text *et decet contingat festis*, St. Gregory has *si deesse contingat festis*. Our biographer probably quoted from memory.
[8] *placatur.*

offer by a prophet, He says, " In whatsoever day and in whatsoever hour the sinner shall turn unto Me I will forget all his iniquities." [1]

VI. Let no one, therefore, dearest brothers, have confidence, if in body only, with worldly interests, he appear at this sacred festival and in his manner of life remain corrupt and irreconciled before the eyes of the hidden and inward spectator who is truly the witness and judge. But, as I remember to have said by way of parenthesis at the beginning and end of the other brief letter, by no means all the things which we should recognise as falling within our recollection, respecting the works [2] of St. Samson, have been handed down in writings. Even in the relation of this second little work so far some, indeed a few only, are to be unrolled to furnish an example of this fact and of that statement; so that from them it may appear to all better founded and more sensible to hold that it is no advantage (to man) to exhibit an example of sanctity before the saints and, in the sight of Almighty God Himself, to separate themselves [3] from the same saints by bad and foul habits.

VII. For indeed, on a certain occasion, when the same Samson went to see [4] Father Dubricius, already mentioned in the former part of the epistle, who was troubled with a certain bodily ailment, and the same Dubricius begged St. Samson that a certain boy, clearly an intimate acquaintance of his, a deacon, Morinus by name, might live [5] with him, St. Samson, forasmuch as he was filled with the Holy Spirit, looking upon the boy and placing the sign of the Cross upon his forehead as he was wont to do, and lovingly receiving him with

[1] Cf. Ezekiel xxxiii, 11–15.
[2] *virtutibus.*
[3] *se disjungere.*
[4] *iter ageret.*
[5] *habitaret.*

his hands and affectionately kissing him, after a short silence thus very joyously at length gave answer : " My father, the net, cast into the bight of the sea, receives all the fish it can catch, but when it is drawn at length to land, the fishermen separate the good from the bad." When he heard this, Father Dubricius, forasmuch as that deacon was clearly dear to him, sighing within himself, hid his annoyance by keeping silence, but on such wise that he could not in the least conceal it by his countenance. St. Samson indeed, by careful scrutiny perceiving this for himself, as though he did not discern anything, joyfully ordered his chrism, from which the office of the episcopate acquired its amplest privilege, to be given to the same deacon that he might the more easily please the father, charging his companions that in his honour, as a trusty friend of his father, they should give him precedence ; and not only this, but that they should admit him before all others to the greater and most famous council of administration, so that in no honour whatsoever, temporal or spiritual, should anyone seem to surpass him. St. Samson knew beforehand by the Spirit, God as I suppose revealing it, of what nature anyone would turn out to be, as afterwards the truth of the matter showed.

VIII. For, as experienced and religious men and, what is more, as letters of the same purport written in a catholic spirit from a place beyond the sea have conveyed to me, on a certain night as they stood, both of them, in the church together for prayer, with the same outward show but with a different temper of mind, St. Samson, looking upon this same deacon, saw a certain blackamoor like a little boy sitting on his left shoulder with his mouth always turned towards his ear, on such wise that St. Samson knew that a conversation

was taking place between a certain devil [1] and the man. When he saw this, in the first place, St. Samson fortified his resolution [2] by making the saving sign, and forthwith, hardly with regret, ordered the brother to go away while he alone, continuing steadfastly in prayer, ever more and more besought the Lord that He would deign to lay bare fully to that man his wickedness in its true colours. Without delay, the deacon went and fell on a heap in bed; immediately a violent fever overtook him so that, as he trembled and turned pale, yea, gnashed and tore with his teeth, all who had approached and seen him, cried out that he was possessed. When word was brought to St. Samson as he prayed, he ran up in haste. Now when the sick man saw him from afar, with a fearful cry he lifted up his voice and said, " Come ! come, Elect of God, I beseech thee, entreat thy God for me lest I finally perish, for, by reason of thy virtue from this time forth to be marvelled at and by reason of my demerits now to be laid bare, I have been revealed to thee as unworthy of thy holy indulgence. From childhood until now I have been ever trained to evil by the artifice of philosophy; [3] for the blackamoor whom thou hast beheld, I have ever had for my teacher [4] in those things which are hateful to God, so that no one seemed to surpass me in them; but now [5] I am no longer allowed to live in shamefulness, and therefore I entreat thee to pray to God the Saviour for the ransoming of my soul even after suffering." And on this wise, as he, who had been filled with all villainy and mischief, poured forth with tears in the

[1] *quendam zabulum.* The word is used for *diabolus* by Cassian and Gildas.
[2] Literally, " armed his face."
[3] *philosophiæ machinatione.*
[4] *doctorem.*
[5] *nunc.*

presence of them all his confession, immediately he became dumb, and from that same hour until his death he had no strength to speak anything at all. Indeed the following night, at midnight, as all the brothers stood around him and unceasingly prayed for his soul's salvation, that unclean soul passed from out the body.

IX. Now when morning appeared, St. Samson ordered them to carry that poor body outside the gate of the monastery to be buried. For three whole days and as many nights, continuing steadfast at the accustomed prayers, he remained without food and without sleep, beseeching God earnestly and with tears that, for his sake, He would be pleased to admit the soul of this most wretched man, even after sore and righteous penance, to favour. At length having slept a little, after intense weariness of body, the comfort of God arrived which, both as regards the absolution of the brother's soul at the last, and the return of his body to the monastery, gently arranged all things. And after some time it was proposed, with the Lord's permission, that masses should be sung [1] for him by Samson himself, and this accordingly was done and he himself offered masses for the same brother for a long time until, by a heavenly announcement, he knew the happy soul of the same to be at liberty. And from this is derived the lesson which shows that it is not in the least possible to hide anything, at any time, good or evil, from the saints. But, in order to add strength to our opinion, we desire to affirm, by means of another example, a fact which, although after his death, we know beyond doubt to have occurred.

X. Now some little time afterwards, when he of

[1] *decantari.*

whom we speak had happily departed to his Lord, after some interval of time, the crosier, which was ever wont to be carried before him and which he had blessed, which in short had been encircled and adorned with lovely things of gold and silver and precious stones, was secretly [1] taken from its case and despoiled by a certain criminous and very wicked man. But this deed of silence and secrecy, the Holy Spirit of God, who ever dwelt with St. Samson, did not allow in silence. For, in the same hour, as he was carrying off those valuables above mentioned, terror seized him to such a degree that, tormented by the enormity of that unwonted fear, he had fallen prostrate to the ground as if half dead. Yet could not this suffice for the warning of a determined and abandoned man. For, after that, while stubbornly and doggedly accomplishing his career (of crime), on a certain night at the winter solstice he came across a certain pond ice-bound with frozen water, which under his feet suddenly broke asunder and he, as no doubt his deserts demanded,[2] died the same night with the fatal ice drawn tight around him, and the cloth,[3] in which the above-mentioned valuables had been placed, fell from his unwilling hands. And it came to pass that, while those brothers who were in this place were sorrowing [4] for the loss of the valuables, a certain man, taking a stroll the following day, found the cloth in which the aforesaid treasure had been concealed and saw the contents lying on the ice, and afterwards looking about him,[5] the stiffened corpse standing rigid in the midst of the ice. When he saw it, the brother, dumbfounded and wondering at all the things which he had seen, related them in order to the rest. When these

[1] *furtim.* [2] *exigentibus.* [3] *linteamen.*
[4] *contristantibus.* [5] *circum se aspiciens.*

brothers saw the treasure they thereupon recognised it as having been torn from the crosier. On this account, therefore, who can doubt that St. Samson transmitted this power, from whom, dying in the flesh, nay, rather, ever living with his God, it is not possible, at one time or another, to hide anything whether good or evil? But whatsoever, and also of whatsoever kind, or at whatsoever time God wills, He clearly reveals to and transmits through His saints, in order that we ignorant and dull [1] ones, placed, for instance, in this filthy mire, may certainly know that they are present at these employments whether good or evil, whichsoever we do; forsooth as they, who are with their God, are already glorified, if not perfectly yet happily, as far as it is possible that so it should be.

XI. But let us bethink [2] ourselves of this saint, while we seek to call to mind everything which good report has spread concerning him. As we write, however, our consciences torment us, forasmuch as we well know we are sufficiently unworthy and unequal to this so wonderful and difficult a task. Yet the mercy of Almighty God, which is never lacking to those who trust in Him, has in this respect encouraged us to weave anew this work, to be of use for the benefit of others, yea, to the end of time, through us who are ignorant, without eloquence and clearly unworthy. And how far others may publish it, both as an example of a good work, by reading it aloud, and as a proof of the merits of His apostles and of all other saints, by following their examples, may be discovered in the mercy of God not to shed forth less of His grace upon us; inasmuch as to him, the illustrious saint, of whom we treat (and whose festival to-day is happily beginning to shine forth among

[1] *pigri.* [2] *recordamur.*

many Britons and Romans,[1] beyond the sea, and on this side of it, and so to speak in heaven, and in earth upon us who sufficiently look for it), was so perfect and complete in the fulfilment of all works of righteousness that, rivalling the aforementioned apostles and other saints, to no one, in short, or in the very least, is he held to be inferior to them even in the manifestation of signs and wonders. For this reason, up to the present day, all, who through him earnestly seek from the Lord with all the strength of faith the healing of the body, find it. For what else, dearest brothers, do we look to proclaim, by this (festival), but the everlasting felicity of St. Samson in the heavens, who, although absent from us in the body, yet from some kind of excellence which he enjoys with God, being of heavenly rank, is without any impediment ever at hand to us, if with honest and clean heart, with untroubled and pure conscience, with regret for mean act and rash alike, we keep the feast day of the same saint and strive, through him, for the help of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For thence it arises that we are truly judged by our own selves and rightly rewarded,[2] on the showing of the Gospel,[3] by that measure, that is, by that performance by which we are distinguished. Do not, I beseech you, my brothers, criticise among yourselves our stupid and grievous ignorances, especially since ye yourselves know perfectly well that Almighty God is the clearest [4] discerner not of words but of deeds. Let no one, therefore, presume to take part in this beautiful celebration, so far as with the body he is able to do so, along with those who, according to the catholic pattern of the holy fathers gone before, blamelessly engage in it, if, in his heart, where God alone

[1] Inhabitants of Romania and Brittany.
[2] *repensamur*.
[3] St. Matthew, vii, 2.
[4] *perspicacissimus*.

is observer, he still continue corruptly and perversely in the wicked ways by which he is defiled. But he who desires to take part in these celebrations intelligently, above all let him strive to deserve and win a place of refreshment and peace in that everlasting festival of heaven, because that saint, with whom we are concerned, although, as it would seem, was full of the Spirit of God beyond all others living on the earth in his own day, and shone forth in signs and wonders and the works of God, nevertheless surpassed almost all these by the extent of his vigils and fasts and every kind of self-denial.

XII. For, as they related of him, who had been sufficiently instructed in his lifetime, he practised very frequent and particularly severe fasts,[1] besides fasts of two days and sometimes whole weeks, that is, seven whole days and on the seventh day only was he refreshed. Moreover, he was wont, very often, to spend very long nights by standing from nightfall till the return of day with his staff quite dropped from his hands.[2] What more shall I say? Neither by day nor by night did he cease from prayer and communion with God. Indeed we have heard that the time of the Lenten fast was so spent that at the beginning [3] he used to withdraw from human habitations to some rather remote spot, carrying with him three loaves [4] to suffice him until the joy of the Paschal Celebration, God supporting him in all things. Having the zeal for God and for His Church burning in his heart; regulating, with a fine discrimination, his instruction seasoned with divine salt according to the characters of sinners; filled, so to speak, with God, he

[1] *superpositiones*. See Du Cange, *Glossary*.
[2] *i. e.*, denying himself even that support.
[3] *in initio*.
[4] *oblationes*, bread for communion.

was courteous and dear to all. And this testimony reminds us to confirm our assertion concerning the works wrought by him.

XIII. For when, on a certain occasion, he preached in the island of Lesia,[1] he arrived at the yearly return of the Kalends of January (*i. e.*, January 1st),[2] because the men of the aforesaid island had been accustomed to celebrate, indeed beyond all others, this wretched anniversary according to a vile custom of their fathers. But he, prudent in spirit, to soften their hardness caused them all to come together to one place, and, God showing the way, a discussion took place for the removal of so great evils. Then all these men, truly loving[3] him, for his sake anathematised these evils and truly promised to submit unreservedly to his directions. He, none the less rejoicing in the Lord, according to the Apostle's (words), called to him all the young children, who were running about throughout the island on account of this abominable holiday, and gave to each of them, in solemn jest, by way of reward, a very trifling piece of gold, and instructed them in the name of the Lord that this impious custom must be no longer observed by them. And so, to this day, in this same place spiritual jests have continued to be a sound[4] and catholic (currency).

XIV. But now, if you please, let these very brief sketches, gathered from a large number, concerning the countless works which God wrought by the same St.

[1] According to M. de la Borderie, Angia is Jersey and Lesia Guernsey.

[2] The orgies on the 1st of January are denounced in the lives of St. Brieuc and St. Ninnoc. Cf. Neander, *Church History*, III, 446.

[3] *amantes*.

[4] There seems to be a play upon the word *solidus*, "sound," which also means a gold coin, at first worth about 25 denarii, but afterwards worth about half as much.

Samson, suffice. Let us in spirit come back to ourselves, to the imitation of our saint; let us love the deeds [1] in which we have learnt that he pleased God; let our deeds correspond with the best services in which, as we have undoubtedly learnt, he excelled others. For so, in the Old Testament, we read, when it was said figuratively at the Lord's command to Moses concerning the eating of the lamb; so speaking, he says, "Ye shall eat it having your loins girded and with shoes on your feet," [2] and so forth. Of a truth, when they celebrate the festival of the Saints at the yearly season, let us remark that, before all things, it is necessary that we should learn to have the loins girded, that is, we must bring before Almighty God chastity of body and purity of mind for sacrifice; moreover, let us take care to have shoes on our feet, because, by closely treading in the footprints of the holy fathers who have died and gone before, we furnish our souls with spiritual shoes. And hence it follows that, not by proclaiming the deeds of the same men with the voice, but by imitating and loving their work, we ourselves set our course in the right way which leads to heaven. For, truly, the requests which are sought of Christ through the saints are not to be mixed up with evil habits; but, by the faithful supplication of those who pray, all things are bestowed in accordance with the fore-knowledge of the Lord who hears and knows; nay, in fact, with the awful knowledge of this, we ought thoroughly to examine ourselves in the case of our supplications, because the Lord Himself dreadfully laments in the Gospel, saying, "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, shall himself enter the kingdom of heaven,

[1] *actus.*

[2] Exodus xii, 11: *lumbos vestros præcingetis.* The Vulgate reads, *renes vestros accingetis.*

but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." [1] Whosoever, therefore, merely prays with his lips and belies his prayers by his conduct, procures scorn for himself; nay, renders himself hateful rather than pleasing to the Lord. Therefore, they only are wont to be heard by the Lord who seek a thing by prayer and ensue it by good conduct. For there is present to my mind a matter very clearly outlined, with which many of you, dearest brothers, are acquainted, and one which I only learnt from a certain excellent brother who assured me that he was himself present.

XV. For, on a certain occasion at the most famous and best of places wherein St. Samson rests in peace, a sudden and fearful fire attacked the house which the brothers, around the oven, were providing with bread, which was on the point of being baked, so that a huge flame mounted to the roof and hissed in the thatch. But no sooner did they discover it than the servants of God, who were assembled in the church for the service of Nones, with one accord, together with the holy and venerable Bishop Loucher himself, rushed together; the crosier of St. Samson and his walking staff were brought forth from the church; and when, at full speed, they drew near to the burning house, they humbly and with full assurance of faith called upon Samson to help them, saying, " Elect of God, St. Samson, set free, we beseech thee,[2] these thy houses so that they be not destroyed by this fire." Without delay, at the first word of those who prayed, a very heavy shower of rain burst forth to such a degree that the fire, which had grown fatally violent, was seen to be extinguished before the eyes

[1] St. Matthew vii, 21. Here again there is, in the text, the use of some version of the Holy Scriptures other than the Vulgate.

[2] *quae sunt* for *quaesumus*.

of all who looked on, for further harm appeared no more.

XVI. Take heed, therefore, dearest brothers, that you who reverence the saints by paying them honour at the yearly festivals are also able to reverence the good which they themselves have done, by imitating them in your manner of life. Take heed, I say, that you,[1] who have been found worthy to take part in the earthly festivals of holy men may also be found worthy to take part in the felicity which they enjoy to the full in the heavenly festivals of angels, so that, while you seek to follow the doctrines which they taught and the deeds in which they unceasingly and unsparingly laboured, you may have strength to follow, under God's guidance, and with their intercessions, by a sure course, that path of theirs which led them, without any let of earthly hindrance, to everlasting felicity, where our Lord Jesus Christ reigneth for ever, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is glory and honour everlasting, world without end. Amen.

[1] *ut qui.*

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